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THE MOTION PICTURE COMRADES SERIES

By ELMER TRACEY BARNES

The object of these books is to place before the reader the unusual experiences of a party of boys who succeed in filming a number of interesting scenes.

The stories are replete with striking incidents on land and sea, and above all they describe with remarkable accuracy the methods employed to obtain many of the wonderful pictures which may be seen on the screen.

The Motion Picture Comrades' Great Venture;
or, On the Road with the Big Round Top

**The Motion Picture Comrades Through African
Jungles;**

or, The Camera Boys in Wild Animal Land

The Motion Picture Comrades Along the Orinoco;
or, Facing Perils in the Tropics

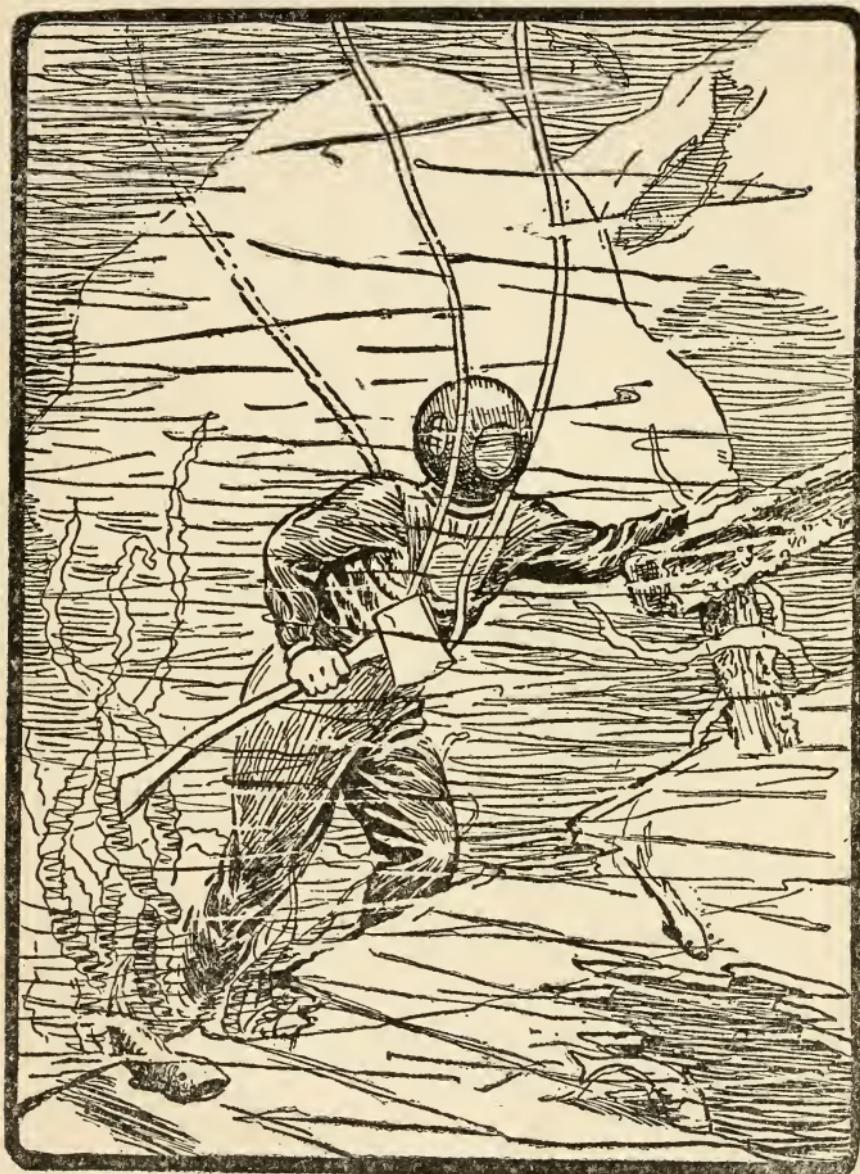
The Motion Picture Comrades Aboard a Submarine;
or, Searching for Treasure Under the Sea

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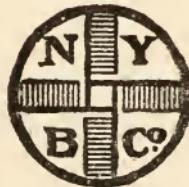
Before him he discovered the long sought hulk.

THE MOTION PICTURE COMRADES ABOARD A SUBMARINE

OR

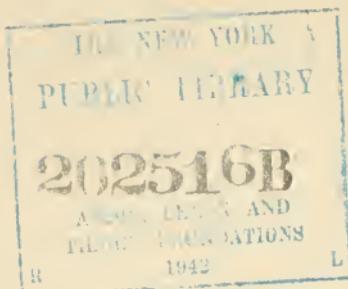
SEARCHING FOR TREASURE UNDER THE SEA

BY
ELMER TRACEY BARNES



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THE MOTION PICTURE COMRADES ABOARD A SUBMARINE

CHAPTER I

HOW IT HAPPENED

“JACK will be back from the express office soon, and then, I take it, if everything is shipshape, this queer contraption they call a diving-boat and named the *Argonaut*, expects to get away from Baltimore, eh, Oscar?”

“So the Captain told me, Ballyhoo. He has his clearance papers, all right.”

“Huh! Guess the port officials didn’t examine this craft as closely as they might have done in these troublous times, with more than half the world ablaze.”

“Lower your voice a bit, Ballyhoo, when you are referring to the rifles, and that quick-firing gun they’ve got so snugly hidden below. But it’s all fair and square. Every steam craft is allowed one gun for defensive purposes. Some big Atlantic liners have a three-inch gun at the stern, you remember.”

“A very good reason we have, too, for carrying one, Oscar, since the main object of our trip to tropical seas is the recovery of sunken treasure.”

“And don’t forget either, while about it, Bally-hoo, that there’s opposition in the field, a rival expedition headed by that old blockade-runner and adventurer, Captain Badger.”

“That’s right, and we may need our gun badly before we come back again—if we ever do.”

“Well, most of our interest in this wonderful trip doesn’t lie in the chance of finding the stores of gold and silver lying in the old hulks of vessels that were sunk, some of them a hundred or two years ago. We’ve got our own plans to carry out, and could call the venture a glorious success even if we didn’t run across a single Spanish doubloon.”

“Yes, providing the scheme works, as Jack believes it will, and his judgment is worth a whole lot on anything that is connected with motion picture photography. We hope to secure films that are bound to startle the world of screen lovers, showing as they will the up to now unknown secrets lying deep down under the surface of the sea.”

“It’s a great risk we’re taking, but we’ve put over two big jobs so far and why not a third? Those circus films are still going the rounds, and pronounced gilt-edged wherever they are shown.”*

“Yes, and our series of pictures depicting wild

* See “The Motion Picture Comrades’ Great Venture.”

animal life in the African jungles have met with great favor too.† We've been overwhelmed ever since we got back, with all sorts of wildcat offers to undertake new schemes, all of which so far we've had to turn down. And yet here we are about to start off on the most hazardous adventure that any one could possibly think of."

"But this is different, you know, Ballyhoo; and besides it came to us through that old uncle of your mother's, who has a third interest in the venture, though he was knocked out of accompanying the boat by that bad attack of rheumatism."

"Well, I wish Jack would hurry up, because I think our Captain acts as if he might be anxious to cast off, and steam down Chesapeake Bay."

The speakers were a couple of hardy looking well grown boys. They lounged on the little upper deck, if such it could be called, of a very odd-looking craft lying snugly hidden in a certain secluded basin connected with a Baltimore ship-yard.

In fact the low, squatly craft was nothing more nor less than a submarine built somewhat after the style of those steel whaleback barges used for carrying huge cargoes of grain on the Northern Lakes.

Money had not been spared in the building and equipping of this craft, which was really owned and controlled by the "Argonaut Submarine Div-

† See "The Motion Picture Comrades Through African Jungles."

ing-boat Company," and constructed for a purpose which has been partly disclosed by the brief conversation between the two boys.

Oscar Farrar and his two chums lived in the town of Melancton in an Eastern State. The boy whom he had been calling by that quaint nickname of "Ballyhoo" was really Jonathan Edwards Jones. For some years he had taken such delight in mimicing the animals usually seen in a menagerie, as well as the "barkers" who tried to coax the gaping public to patronize their side shows, where all manner of freaks were on exhibition, that naturally enough he soon found himself given the name of "Ballyhoo," which term is often used to designate loud-tongued orators.

The third boy, whom they had mentioned as "Jack," had Anderson for a surname. He was a positive marvel in connection with anything that had to do with photography in all its branches. His father before him had been devoted to the art, and had spent several years, lost in the wilds of Darkest Africa, a prisoner in the big kraal of a savage black king, from which captivity he had only recently escaped, thanks to the bravery of his son and his chums.

The three comrades were now about to start forth on an expedition that really dwarfed their previous successes by virtue of its daring. This fascinating project had come about in a peculiar fashion which may as well be explained here and now while Oscar and Ballyhoo impatiently await the coming of Jack.

To the Jones home in Melancton had come one day a queer old gentleman who turned out to be an uncle of Ballyhoo's mother. This Abner Crawley had led an adventurous life, though no one would suspect it to look at his mild blue eyes and hear his mellow, jolly laugh.

He had followed the hazardous profession of a deep sea diver, spending years out in Far Eastern seas, diving with the natives for pearl oysters, and in many ways had managed to accumulate quite a nice little fortune.

The stories he spun to Ballyhoo, Oscar and Jack thrilled them with a boyish desire to also see some of the wonders of that same submarine world. Then, as the old man learned how they had already shown a disposition to do and dare, he began to interest them in his latest and greatest scheme.

It seemed he had been induced to take a third interest in a venture that had for its main object the salvage of certain sunken treasure-ships, which were located on a chart. In many cases these ships had gone down scores and scores of years ago, but in comparatively shallow water, so that it seemed feasible to reach them through the agency of an ordinary diving suit; or better still, with the assistance of a modern submarine built for that express purpose.

The boys of course hastened to read Jules Verne's startling book, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," with which they were more or less familiar beforehand. Their

enthusiasm grew by leaps and bounds as they started to discuss the possibilities of their being allowed to join this strange expedition.

Jack, aided and abetted by his father, had conceived the idea that as the undersea boat had been constructed particularly with a view to cruising down at the bottom of the sea, and had unusual facilities for allowing those aboard to see all that went on in subterranean depths, it might be possible to secure a remarkable series of motion pictures disclosing undreamed of wonders, the queer creatures that never came to the surface, as well as the amazing forest of giant plants that grew far down in the ever peaceful valleys of the ocean.

In the end it had worked out just as the scheming old master diver had wished. The boys were given an opportunity to accompany the expedition as representatives of Uncle Abner Crawley. They would be given all sorts of chances to use their camera, and at the same time if fortune favored the work of the divers one half of the Crawley third was to be handed over to them.

And such was the final arrangement that had been made. They had proceeded to Baltimore, made the acquaintance of their intended future companions, taken up their limited quarters aboard the well named *Argonaut*, and Jack was even now paying a parting visit to the post office to get final mails, as well as to the express office for an extra supply of films made especially to resist damage by warm, sticky weather in the tropics.

“There he comes at last!” Ballyhoo presently announced, as a boy was discovered heading their way, and well laden with bundles.

Jack turned out to be a well-built young chap, with a thoughtful face, and the glow of an enthusiastic artist in his eyes. He soon climbed aboard the strange boat, after which the Captain’s voice was heard giving orders. Then they could feel the quiver that told them the engines were beginning to work; cables were cast off, and a cheer broke from the group on the shore, some of them laboring men belonging to the shipyard, others relatives of those aboard, or it might be stockholders in the venture.

Soon afterwards they had left the city of Baltimore behind them, and were moving smoothly and swiftly down the bay. After that would come the open sea, with its mysterious influences, its terrible storms, dreaded calms, and all surrounded by the halo of romance of long-gone centuries.

The three boys sat there on the miniature upper deck long after the voyage had really begun, saying little, since their hearts naturally enough were heavy because of the fact that they had finally severed the ties that bound them to the loved ones at home.

And so they started down the great Chesapeake Bay, bound for the tropics.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DIP UNDER THE SURFACE

By degrees this feeling of depression passed away. They were healthy boys, and as such could not long remain in the grip of the "blues." It was all their own doings, too, and they were headed for an experience that certainly no other young fellows had ever been given before.

Soon they were taking an interest in all that went on around them. Oyster boats with the men at work dredging or tonging; duck hunters in blinds, or lying, it might be, in sink-boxes on the shallows with their decoys all around them—things like these were constantly cropping up to be observed through the marine glasses which they had been thoughtful enough to provide themselves with before starting on the voyage.

The afternoon sun was sinking toward the western horizon, and it was figured that by morning they would have arrived close to the ocean at Hampton Roads.

"How fast are we going, do you think, boys?" Ballyhoo was asking, while they continued to sit there and enjoy the bracing air of that late Fall afternoon.

“That’s hard to decide,” Oscar told him. “I understand that this boat can make about seventeen miles on the surface of the water, providing the sea is fairly calm. We may be doing nearly that right now.”

“And when she sinks down under the sea, what is she capable of doing then?” continued Ballyhoo, always eager for facts.

“Oh! I think it was about eight or nine knots an hour, which would be pretty good, all things considered,” Oscar replied.

“Our quarters are pretty cramped and we’ll be crowded a whole lot,” Jack said in a reflective way, “but we expected that before we came. Your uncle told us, Ballyhoo, we’d likely have to put up with many discomforts, and lack of space would be one of them.”

“What’s the odds so long as we’re happy,” Ballyhoo Jones laughingly declared. “We can be as snug as three bugs in a rug. There are some things a heap worse than being crowded. Sitting up in a bally old tree the livelong night, with a pair of hungry lions prowling around under you is one of them.”

“Yes, you know all about that sort of thing, Ballyhoo,” chuckled Oscar; “also how being almost devoured by cannibal ants feels. But we’re not going to run across anything like that on *this* trip, I reckon.”

“Oh! give things a chance, boys,” said Ballyhoo, confidently, “and there’ll be adventures a-plenty cropping up to make our hearts jump like

mad. This time it may be storms, pirates, a damaged engine while we're lying at the bottom of the sea so we can't rise for air, and all that sort of thing."

"What are you staring so hard at through the glasses, Jack?" asked Oscar, giving little heed to the pleasant prospect thus outlined so cheerfully by Ballyhoo, for he knew very well the other was only joking when he rattled these possible perils off so glibly.

"Why, I was watching that black steam yacht over there a mile or so away from us," Jack remarked, lowering the marine glasses as he spoke. "I could see a fellow in some sort of uniform holding glasses on us right along. I guess he must be wondering whether we mightn't prove to be a German submarine that had strayed across the broad Atlantic, like they threaten to do some of these fine days, to sink British munition steamships close to our shores, rather than wait for them to get over into the waters they've marked as the war zone."

"I tell you what I think," he observed a minute afterwards, "that same black steam yacht may be our rival, the *Dauntless*, and the man who is watching us all the while would then be that rollicking old world-wide adventurer, Captain Badger, who has sailed the Seven Seas from boyhood, been everything from blockade-runner to naval officer, and perhaps a little of a pirate on the sly besides."

"Whew! do you really think so, Oscar?" cried

Ballyhoo; "please let me have a peek at him then. I've heard so much about the old reprobate I'd love to say I'd actually set eyes on his phiz, even at a mile away."

"We may see a little more of him than we want, before we're done with this job," Oscar told him, with the air of a prophet, but Ballyhoo only laughed, for he was not the one to cross any bridge before he came to it.

Just then Captain Barnaby Shooks, the man who had been placed in full charge of the treasure-hunting expedition by the incorporated company, came up the ladder from the conning-tower of the submarine boat. He was a grizzled old sea dog, who had seen much of life on many waters, and was well qualified to manage just such a strange mission as the one that had been placed in his hands.

He too carried a glass which he quickly focussed on the black steam yacht that was evidently capable of making much faster time than the low *Argonaut*, often almost awash.

"We've about made up our minds, Captain," remarked Ballyhoo, who had struck up quite an intimate acquaintance with the commander, after his frank, confiding fashion, "that yonder vessel might be the *Dauntless*, our rival in the salvage trade. Were we right about that, sir?"

"It's the *Dauntless*, sure enough," the captain told them, "and they're holding in as if they'd like to shadow us all the way down to where we're going."

“Oh! could they do that?” demanded Ballyhoo, in dismay.

“Well, if you’ve ever tried to clap your finger on a flea,” laughed the old mariner, “you’d know what it means to keep tabs on a boat that can duck under the surface of the sea, and stay there for ten hours, moving all the while.”

Captain Barnaby Shooks somehow did not seem to talk as most sea captains do in stories. He never once said “shiver my timbers” or used any similar phrase that was calculated to stamp him as a nautical man. Perhaps this arose from the fact that many years had elapsed since last he trod the deck of a genuine sailing vessel. With the gradual disappearance of the full-rigged ships, the brigs, and the barques, all that peculiar language is going out of date. Mechanics have taken the places of the old-time sailors accustomed to clambering up the shrouds, and standing on the yards of a ship reeling in an eighty mile gale.

When later on, after the sun had set, the boys prepared to go down below for supper, that black steam yacht was still on their lee quarter, and apparently bound to keep within sighting distance.

“Goodness gracious!” Ballyhoo was remarking the last thing before he crept down the steep little ladder leading into the conning tower, from which place they could reach the lower parts of the queer vessel, “I only hope they don’t mean to ram us in the night-time, and so get rid of a dangerous rival.”

“Not much danger of that,” Oscar assured him.

“Captain Shooks will keep a faithful watch every minute of the time. And besides, I’ve got a sneaking suspicion that those fellows don’t know all we do about the location of sunken treasure, also that their plan is to spy on us, and then steal our thunder.”

They did not go on deck again after partaking of the evening meal in the little saloon devoted to cabin purposes, in which, as Ballyhoo said, was not room to “whirl a cat around by the tail.” The night air was cold, and the blackness would prevent them from seeing anything worth while.

None of them secured much sleep during that first night. Everything was against it, for their quarters were terribly cramped, and the air anything but fresh, even though the boat continued to remain upon the surface of the water all through the night.

“Whee! just imagine what it’s going to be when we’re down under the surface of the sea,” said Ballyhoo, at one time, as they prepared to lie down in their bunks, placed above each other in a tier.

“Oh! you can get used to most anything in time,” Jack assured him, “if only you make up your mind that way. Always think of something that’s a whole lot worse, and it’s wonderful how satisfied you soon feel.”

The boat rolled somewhat later on in the night, and Oscar, being awake, made up his mind that no doubt they were coming closer to the wide mouth of the great bay, so that they now encount-

ered the long inward sweep of the ocean's heaving billows.

Sure enough, when, after awakening to find that it was morning, for light came in through the heavy glass observation bull's-eyes arranged in numerous places, the boys upon reaching the deck again discovered that they could look far out to sea, as the submarine had already passed Fortress Monroe and was now awaiting the coming of a cutter from a black destroyer carrying the U. S. flag, that had shot out to overtake them.

An officer came aboard, and was shown down into the captain's diminutive cabin, where no doubt he looked over the ship's papers, asked many questions concerning the proposed voyage, which must have interested him considerably, and finally said "good-bye and good luck" to the smiling skipper.

Then the engines once more began to throb, and the boat to quiver with the energy they displayed. The boys, looking back toward the beautiful shores they were leaving, again had their thoughts turn toward the folks at home. But the summons to breakfast dissipated all such sad reflections; and when an hour later they again came on deck the shore was dim and hazy in the distance.

Evidently they were now well started on their interesting voyage. What the outcome was going to be could only be guessed at; but hope ran high in all their hearts.

"There's our friend, the enemy, just as we expected would be the case!" cried Ballyhoo Jones

as he pointed to a dim spot several miles off, and which seemed to be some sort of black boat, also bound south.

"I'm looking at something else, though," remarked Oscar. "That bank of clouds lying low along the horizon in the south seems to have a storm hidden in it. And we are heading straight that way in the bargain."

"Oh! perhaps it's only a little squall, such as they often meet in these waters," Jack was saying. "The West Indian hurricane season is pretty well over by now, you know, or else the expedition wouldn't have started when it did."

"But even a little storm would send the waves clean over this low boat," suggested Ballyhoo. "I'm not a born sailor, and I don't want to seem bothered when there's no danger, but you can see how we wallow at times right now, when we run smack up against one of those long swells."

"You mustn't forget," Oscar told him, "that we've got one way of snapping our fingers at the wind and the waves when the time comes."

"Course you mean by submerging, Oscar," continued the other, grinning amiably. "I had that in mind all the while, but was only fishing to find out what you other fellows thought about it. The wind seems to be increasing a whole lot, and, yes sir, those clouds are rising right now. Whee! looks like we'll experience our first dip below the waves before another hour goes by."

As the clouds rose higher the sea began to look black. Although they knew what caused this the

boys could not keep from feeling a little anxious, especially when the waves commenced to splash them with spud, as they struck the bow of the dipping submarine and broke.

They were really glad, therefore, when the captain ordered them to go below, as it was necessary to make preparations against foul weather. For some time afterwards the little boat labored heavily, until Ballyhoo began to feel the first signs of uneasiness in the pit of his stomach.

All of them felt relieved when they discovered that they were commencing to sink. The water tanks were being filled rapidly, and before long they realized that in truth they had vanished from the surface of the sea.

How calm it seemed down there, with the engines once more taking up their regular pulsations. The boys glued their eyes to the thick plate-glass observation bull's-eyes, but all they could see when the searchlight was turned on was rushing green water all around them.

Doubtless the storm raged above as the squall spread over the sea, but safe in the stanch little submarine, far beneath the troubled surface, they knew nothing of it. By degrees the three chums became more used to their strange surroundings. The experience of novelty began to wear away. When one becomes accustomed to anything it no longer has the power to excite wonder, and give the same kind of thrill.

Later on they could sleep calmly when lying at the bottom of the sea, even though the manufac-

tured air did seem queer, and breathing not as comfortable as under ordinary conditions, with the pure article to inhale.

Hours passed during which they continued to forge ahead. Oscar figured that they were making something like eight knots an hour while pushing through the depths.

Then came the time when they arose to take an observation through the periscope. The boys, of course, had to be allowed a chance to see, of which they hastened to avail themselves eagerly.

Never would they forget that first experience at looking through the periscope of a submarine far out at sea. The still heaving waters, running far away to the horizon, looked startling to their unaccustomed eyes. It seemed as though they might be lying on the edge of the world itself, and looking over a vast undulating plain.

When the captain judged that it would be safe to come up, as the storm had passed, and the sea was no longer rough, he gave the order.

Again the boys sought their old stand up on the small deck where the ventilation shafts protruded, and the periscope reared its lofty head.

Everywhere they looked the same tumbling waters met their gaze. Not a vessel was in sight, even through the glasses.

“We’ve given the *Dauntless* the slip, all right!” Ballyhoo hastened to boast after he had made sure of this fact.

“But the chances are we’ll see considerably

more of that same boat before we're through with this voyage," said Jack; and subsequent happenings proved him a true prophet, as will be made manifest later on in this story.

CHAPTER III

A PERIL OF TROPICAL WATERS

DAYS and nights followed. All the time the boat continued to head into the south, and leagues upon leagues were placed behind them. Sometimes they were able to pick up glimpses of land far away to the west; and one night the boys were told that the flashlight they watched, so like a distant star, was Jupiter Light situated at the lower extremity of the Indian River in Florida. Off somewhere in the opposite quarter lay the Bahamas, and Old Nassau, of which they had read so often.

They were now getting down to a warm climate, and on this account spent as much time on deck as possible. Here the ocean breeze fanned their already ruddy cheeks, and they could watch the white-winged gulls and other sea birds flying in eccentric fashion here, there, and everywhere, now dipping to snap up a fragment of food cast overboard, and anon wheeling high overhead, or following the course of the speeding submarine as though keeping time with its progress.

Occasionally they met some vessel bound north. Now it might be a lumber schooner, and

then again a coastal steamer. When one of the latter passed not far away the side seemed to be black with people, all staring at the strange, squatly craft, for doubtless the officers passed the word around that it was one of those species of undersea boats that had been creating such terrible havoc across the Atlantic.

So the time slipped along, and one sunny day they drew near an island in the Caribbean Sea where the palms hung low over the water, and made a picture that set Jack busy with his camera, for it was really his first chance to do anything along that favorite line.

“Seems that we’re meaning to lay by here a short spell,” Ballyhoo announced, as the ardent photographer was busying himself with his camera.

“What’s the scheme?” asked Oscar. “Have we arrived at the first pocket where they believe they can strike a rich bonanza?”

“Not yet, along those lines,” he was informed by the wise Ballyhoo, evidently seeking to let them know that he had been interviewing Captain Shooks. “Our port engine doesn’t work as it should, you see, and our careful skipper believes in taking time by the forelock, so he’s going to spend a few hours in overhauling it. You see, they’re putting out an anchor in the lee of this island. If we only had time we might get the collapsible boat out and go ashore.”

“It would hardly pay us,” ventured Oscar. “We’ll have plenty of other chances to stretch our

legs on a tropical cocoanut island, I imagine."

"Then I wonder if it wouldn't be a bully good idea to have a swim?" continued the other, evidently bent on making some sort of dent in the monotony of the programme.

"Better ask the captain about that first," suggested Oscar.

"But why should he care, when I can swim and dive like a duck?" objected Ballyhoo.

Just then the commander coming up from below the Jones boy put the question to him, and in such a wheedling way that the grizzled old skipper chuckled as he went on to say in reply:

"Well, I can feel for you, Ballyhoo, because when I was young swimming was my best hold. I'd go any distance just to get in the water. It's a fine day for a duck, too, with those clouds sailing over, and dimming the hot sun part of the time. So I guess you can enjoy yourself for half an hour or so. But stick close by, son, and if you hear a shout make for the boat like greased lightning."

Ballyhoo looked curious on hearing him talk in that way.

"Who's going to bother with me here, sir?" he asked. "I can see a couple of natives in canoes headed out this way, but the Indians are only bent on trade of some sort; most likely they've got cocoanuts or oranges or bananas to sell. What should I be afraid of here, Captain?"

"Oh! I don't really believe there's any danger, lad, but in these Southern waters it's always wise

to keep an eye to windward for squalls, and by that I mean sharks."

"Gee whiz! I forgot that!" exclaimed Ballyhoo; and then thinking that he saw Jack laughing in his sleeve he hastened to add: "but that doesn't faize me one little bit. I guess I could get out of the way of a lazy old shark any time."

Accordingly, Ballyhoo commenced to undress. He was a regular water duck when it came to all such aquatic sports as boys delight in, and could both swim and dive in a way that no other fellow in all Melancton ever equalled.

Somehow neither of the others seemed to care to follow his example, though he called out to them to "come in, the water's fine." Jack was too much interested in his camera just then, while Oscar didn't feel like it. The thought of any peril hovering around did not keep him from copying Ballyhoo's example; but he had suffered terribly from sunburned shoulders not a great while before, and hardly liked the idea of taking the risk again.

While Ballyhoo and two of the crew frisked in the water, seeming to be having a glorious time, Jack and Oscar sat there on the upper deck and talked.

"How little we dreamed when we first read that wonderful book of Jules Verne," the former was saying, "that the time would come when all of us might experience many of the very sensations he described so well."

"That's a fact," his chum admitted, "yet here

we are aboard an undersea boat, and bound on an enterprise almost as romantic as that of the *Nautilus*. The combination of searching for lost treasure at the bottom of the sea, and also taking motion pictures of the ocean depths, is something worth while."

"Look at Ballyhoo cutting up in the water, will you, Oscar. That chum of ours can give a big lead to either of those two men, and then make circles around him. Hey! Ballyhoo, better not get too far away, you know!"

"Oh! that's all right, Jack," answered the other, who had gone a third of the way toward the palm-fringed shore of the island; "nothing doing along the danger line. You fellows don't know what you're missing, I tell you."

The boys busied themselves in purchasing some tropical fruits from one of the natives who had paddled out in their canoes for barter. They also had shells and some nautical curios, but the boys did not purchase any of these.

"I'm afraid the captain would toss everything overboard if he found us loading up with such stuff," laughed Oscar. "The boat is crowded as it is; and what little space they have left is for something worth a heap more than just marine shells, and such junk."

From down below could be heard the clinking sound of hammers as the engineer and his assistant worked at the engine to put it in better condition for business. The day was sultry and both boys felt relieved that these clouds mercifully

stood between the pitiless rays of the sun and themselves.

“We must be getting somewhere near our first stop,” remarked Oscar, after another little spell had gone by; “for I saw the skipper overhauling his charts this morning, and that looked like business.”

“None of us will be sorry,” Jack went on to say, “because we’re fairly wild to learn what it really looks like down there among the sea ferns, and the queer forests they say grow on the bottom of the ocean. Then again there are all kinds of queer monsters that you’re likely to come on, most of them never seen near the surface. Oh! I’m clear daffy with wanting to click off some of those sights.”

Just then the captain came up the ladder again. Oscar was about to ask some question that had occurred to him when he held his tongue. The skipper was seen to shade his eyes with his hand, and stare earnestly toward the shore. Ballyhoo was still almost a third of the way across the open water lying between the boat and the palms.

Then they heard Captain Shooks utter an exclamation. It thrilled them both, and brought them to their feet, as though touched by a galvanic battery.

Turning swiftly, the skipper snatched up the megaphone that had been lying close by, and this he raised to his mouth.

Across the water his heavy voice rang like the brazen notes of an alarm bell.

“Sharks! Ahoy, Ballyhoo, swim for the boat, lad, swim for the boat!”

And looking beyond the spot where their chum was idly floating on his back, Oscar and Jack caught sight of an ugly black fin cutting the water in eccentric curves.

CHAPTER IV

THE INDIAN SHARK-KILLER

OTHER voices blended with that of the skipper. The two sailors in the water were screeching as loud as they could, though in no apparent peril, since they had not followed Ballyhoo far from the side of the boat.

Both Jack and Oscar were thrilled with a sudden fear. Now they could see a second sharp-pointed fin zigzagging through the waters. From the excited manner in which the sharks were swimming, first this way and then that, it seemed as though some instinct must have told them there was a chance to secure a dinner. Oscar was forcibly reminded of the mysterious way in which those carrion birds away over there in Africa would appear high in the heavens almost as soon as game had been brought down, as though their wonderful sense of smell, or some strange instinct, told them of the feast that was preparing.

Ballyhoo was no longer lying there floating on his back. The sturdy shout of the captain through the megaphone had reached him as clear as a bell. It was enough to put activity into the boldest

swimmer's frame; and so Ballyhoo started at full speed in the direction of the submarine.

Oscar vanished down the ladder leading into the conning tower, as though he had conceived some project that might help in case of desperate need. Jack, like the captain, could only stand there and stare. All at once the instinct came to him to turn his camera on the scene. Perhaps it was mechanically that the boy commenced to turn the crank, hardly knowing what he was doing, save that the artist spirit in him was being appealed to by the dramatic nature of the event.

Although Ballyhoo was working his arms like flails, and making prize time in cutting through the water, those monsters of the deep could swim twice as fast as a mere human being at his best.

Now it seemed as though they must have found the right scent at last. They were coming on in a direct line for the struggling boy. The sound of his arms beating the water into foam as he fought his way onward may have attracted them; but no matter from what cause, both sharks were speeding directly to the spot.

"Faster, lad, faster! they're after you!" roared the captain, himself horror-stricken at the prospect of a sea tragedy.

If anything could cause Ballyhoo to put new vigor into his frantic strokes, it was that urgent appeal. But even though he may have added to his speed it was but a matter of fractions, and could not enter into the result at all.

Just then Oscar came shooting out of the little trap in the deck, looking white and peaked. He clutched something in his hands. Jack, even as he continued to grind mechanically away at his machine, saw what it was, and a fresh spasm of hope gripped his aching heart.

How fortunate it was that Oscar always kept his repeating rifle ready charged for business. He had gone down below like "a streak of greased lightning," as he afterwards explained it, and, snatching his gun, started up again, flinging aside the engineer, who, having heard the outcries, was bent on reaching the deck so as to learn what was the matter.

So Oscar flung himself forward, and, raising his rifle, waited to see at which of the two monsters he should commence firing. They had gained on Ballyhoo fearfully. The swimming boy, glancing over his shoulder each time he swung back and forth with his alternate strokes, could, doubtless, see those sharp fins cutting the water like so many knife blades.

Ballyhoo was pretty badly frightened by that time. No doubt all that he had ever read about swimmers attacked and bitten by man-eating sharks must have flashed before his mental vision. But he was straining himself to the very utmost now, and nothing could increase his pace.

At that rate he must be overhauled long before he could gain the safety of the boat. Oscar realized this even as he glanced along the barrel of his gun, and then pressed the trigger.

With the sharp report he saw the water splash upward where the bullet struck.

“You hit him, lad, you surely did; give the beggar another try!” snapped the intensely interested captain.

Again Oscar fired, and this time there could be no doubt, for they all plainly saw the flirt of a huge tail above the surface of the water; and, unless their eyesight deceived them, the sea in that vicinity was immediately tinged with blood.

Apparently that monster was disposed of, temporarily at least, and with a grim intention of repeating his triumph Oscar sought to get a chance at the other man-eater.

He found that somehow it was harder to hit this fellow, for as he came on he dodged so violently from side to side that the shots seemed to miss him entirely.

“Splash as hard as you can, son!” boomed the skipper through his megaphone; for it is a well-known fact that often sharks may be kept away by a tremendous commotion in the water, and more than a few lives have been saved through that artifice.

Ballyhoo heard and obeyed. He kept up his strenuous efforts right along, but managed to accompany them with such splashing as he found possible, though doubtless himself quite at a loss to know why he had been told to do this.

Then Oscar awoke to a terrible realization. His magazine had been emptied, for no fresh cartridge slipped into the firing chamber when he

threw out the old brass shell, and worked the mechanism for a succession!

He could not lift a hand toward helping his chum! How bitterly did he repent being in such great haste, and taking too big chances. Had he only restrained his eagerness until the shark came closer, he might have easily sent a bullet home that would have finished the ugly monster.

He dropped the gun with a crash on the deck. It seemed to Jack, still working at his camera crank, that Oscar was almost tempted to madly fling himself over into the sea, and try to save poor, exhausted Ballyhoo, or else suffer the consequences.

But a hand seized the boy and held him fast.

“No, no, youngster, none of that foolishness,” cried the skipper. “Look again, and you’ll see that it isn’t so hopeless after all. The Injun is a-going to show us something. I’ve seen it done many a time out there at Ceylon, and along the Australian pearl shore too.”

These encouraging words caused Oscar to notice that one of the natives with whom he and Jack had just been bartering for fresh fruit was urging his canoe along like mad. He aimed to pass the swimmer by, and get between Ballyhoo and the oncoming sea monster.

“Keep cranking, Jack, keep it going, old fellow!” cried Oscar. “This picture will be something worth while! There, see that brown-skinned native go in, will you, just like a plummet? It’s

good-bye to Mr. Shark, I guess, Jack—but don’t stop a second, do you hear?”

Indeed, Jack was working steadily, and with a much lighter heart, for something within seemed to tell him that Ballyhoo would after all be spared. He had seen that Indian plunge gracefully into the sea, and vanish from sight; and between his strong, white teeth Jack had also noticed that he held a long-bladed knife.

He knew, or could easily guess at any rate, just to what use the dusky young fellow meant to put that weapon. Coming up underneath the clumsy man-eater, he would, with one mighty stroke, rip him open, and cause his death.

It was a simple trick, once learned, and not half so dangerous as it seemed; though a greenhorn might run the chance of making a bad job of it, and inviting an attack from the monster.

Ballyhoo was not staying his efforts, even though fresh hope may have taken possession of his heart, once he saw that canoe flit past him, with the Indian standing erect in it, that knife between his teeth.

Oscar kept his eyes riveted upon that advancing fin. Suddenly he saw that it had disappeared. A dreadful fear assailed him. Had the wily shark taken warning of his peril, and swung around so as to give the diver the slip? Then it might yet be that Ballyhoo would suffer from his awful teeth, that could sever an arm or a leg as a hungry boy could bite a wedge from a slice of bread and butter.

But the simitar-like fin did not flash into view again. Ballyhoo, continuing his frantic efforts, was now close to the boat, and Oscar hurriedly clambered down to where he could give the almost exhausted chum a helping hand, so as to hasten his leaving the water.

He was just in the act of doing this when he heard Jack give a whoop. The Indian had bobbed up again, and was swimming with easy strokes around toward where his abandoned canoe floated.

Into this he climbed with considerable agility that aroused the ardent admiration of the watchers; but then these Caribs are regular water-ducks at all times, and can do the most wonderful "stunts" in diving for coins tossed overboard by curious tourists, which they usually recover before the silver bit has sunk ten feet below the surface.

The other native had also pushed forward, and both were seen to be leaning over the sides of their boats tugging at something.

"They've got rope-ends in their hands, Oscar," advised Jack, still turning that crank of his industriously, for he wished to get it all in the picture. "I guess we'll see both sharks again, for here the Indians come paddling back."

It proved just as Jack had said. Each of the Indians had secured one of the marine monsters, and they were terrible looking creatures to be sure, with a length of almost thirteen feet, and sporting rows of teeth that made the boys shiver just to look at them.

Ballyhoo was white, but no more so than Jack himself, who sank back from his camera with a drawn look on his face. He had suffered intensely while trying to do his duty, and at the same time feel an agony of dread grip his heart.

Captain Shooks proceeded to extract several cruel-looking teeth from the jaws.

“Like as not you’ll want to keep the same,” he told Ballyhoo Jones, “so’s to remember the little incident by.”

“Huh!” grunted the winded boy, “small chance of me ever forgetting this raw deal, I guess. I’ll dream I’m being chased by those hungry monsters ever so many times. But ain’t they whales, though? And strikes me I came near playing that Jonah part for once. Please drop them back again, and let ’em float away for the buzzards to feed on.”

This was done, and then Oscar saw to it that the Indian shark killer was abundantly rewarded for his labor, since his prompt dive had undoubtedly saved the life of the boy in the water.

After that Ballyhoo Jones would be mighty careful, so he admitted, when and where he took his bath, for “once bit, twice shy” was going to be his motto.

CHAPTER V

GIVING THE ENEMY THE SLIP

“PLEASE don’t scold, Oscar,” Ballyhoo was saying soon afterwards. “I understand I was a silly fool to take such big chances. The captain knew what he was talking about when he told me to stay near the boat.”

“We all know now,” Jack remarked, “that the thrilling yarns told you by your Uncle Abner Crawley were founded on truth. He’d seen those East Indian pearl-divers stick sharks many a time; yes, and he even said he’d learned to do the same himself while out around Ceylon.”

“I think we’ll be moving along pretty soon,” Oscar remarked, not wishing to add to the repentant Ballyhoo’s confusion, “for I heard the engineer tell Captain Shooks that he had things shipshape once more.”

“Then we can expect to be at our first destination any old time,” Jack went on to say, with an eager gleam in his eye; for he was yearning to see some of the wonderful submarine sights that had been so vividly described to them by the old deep sea master-diver.

Within ten minutes they discovered that the engines had started working again, and a little while later their propeller began to churn the water at the stern.

It was now late in the afternoon. They had really spent several hours behind the island instead of the short space of time at first intended; but then no one felt that it mattered to any great extent, since they were in no particular hurry.

"Let me have that glass, please, Oscar?" Ballyhoo asked. "There's a vessel off to the southwest, low down, and I've got a sneaking notion she looks a whole lot like that same *Dauntless* we gave the slip to."

This, of course, aroused considerable interest on the part of the other boys. Oscar obediently handed the marine glasses over, for they had been lying close beside him on the little upper deck, which Ballyhoo persisted in describing as the "hurricane deck" of the undersea boat. Jack, on his part, ceased handling his camera, and also turned his eyes in the direction indicated.

Hardly had Ballyhoo located the object he had been watching than he gave a satisfied grunt.

"That means you were right, I take it?" remarked Oscar.

"Just what it does," came the ready answer. "She's beat us down here, and seems to know just about where we ought to turn up, hang the luck!"

"Oh! nothing much to worry about yet," Oscar told him. "Whenever we feel like giving her the

once over, all we have to do is to turn the nose of our craft down, kick our heels in the air, and disappear, to come up fifty miles away in any old direction."

"Guess you're right there, Oscar," admitted the boy who still held the glasses glued to his eyes, as though fairly fascinated by the abrupt reappearance of the mysterious black craft, which, as they knew, must be manned by the rival party under the lead of that reckless buccaneer of fortune, Captain Badger.

"That's the beauty of these submarine wrecking craft," laughed Jack; "they can swim on the surface in fair weather, dive below in foul, remain hidden about as long as they please, and all the while be making their little eight or ten knots an hour in any old direction. Yes, they are as hard to locate as a jumping flea—now you've got him, but when you go to look he isn't there."

Captain Shooks had been summoned on deck, and agreed with the boys the boat was their persistent rival that continued to shadow them. As evening was coming on he laid his plan of campaign accordingly. They started off on a course at right angles with the one they had intended to take. This would, of course, deceive the enemy, doubtless keeping a watch over their movements all the while.

"When it gets good and dark," explained Oscar to his comrades, "why, we mean to dip under, turn around, and head into the southwest again. Once we get twenty miles away from this point,

and it will be safe for us to come to the surface again, because our lights won't show. By that time they'll be in a haze, and dodging every-which-way, looking for a speck on the water."

So the sun set, and, as always happens down toward the tropics, there was a very short intermission between that event and the coming of darkness. Twilight belongs to the Northern zones.

When the call to supper came it was already growing dusk.

"We'll not be up again to-night, I reckon," assumed Ballyhoo, with a sigh, for to tell the truth he did not particularly relish being made a prisoner inside that strange boat, and kept hermetically sealed far below the surface of the ocean, "just as much shut-in," he often said, "as sardines in a can, or one of those old mummies we've seen in museums when they were kept tight in their sarcophagi."

It turned out just as he prophesied. Even while they were eating they knew from various signs that the boat was sinking. The intake of water filling the tanks could be plainly heard; and then besides the engines had ceased working. While it was always possible for the submarine to dive when in motion, still as a rule the skipper preferred to take his dip while stationary.

Once below and they were able to steer any course they pleased, by the aid of their compass, which worked just as well then as when the boat rode on the surface.

By now the boys were beginning to grow a little accustomed to some of the experiences that had seemed so marvelous to them at first.

Taking it all in all it was very comfortable there in that snug little saloon, where the captain and the three boys ate their meals. Considerable ducking had to be indulged in so as to avoid knocking their heads, which Ballyhoo seemed to be particularly addicted to, much to his discomfort.

“Why, I’ll have a whole row of knobs around my coco before we’re through with this trip,” he complained after he had again arisen too suddenly, and, consequently, banged the top of his head against the low ceiling of the saloon.

“I notice that already you’re beginning to have a lot of trouble pulling your cap on,” Jack told him; “and if you take my advice you’ll think twice before you jump up so hastily. It’s going to be a good thing to tone you down, Ballyhoo. Beware of getting a swelled head.”

They spent the evening as best the conditions allowed. Space was at such a high premium down inside the little submarine craft that there could be no moving around except in exceptional cases. On this account they had to sit close together and amuse themselves by exchanging views on various subjects, writing up their logs, and, of course, thinking of those left at home.

Then came the time for sleep. Ballyhoo had quite exhausted himself through his fierce exertions in the water, coupled with the mental

anguish he must certainly have endured. Consequently, he was dozing long before either of the others thought to retire.

At the time Oscar crawled into his tight-fitting bunk it was four bells, or ten o'clock. He lay there for some time planning, and also allowing his mind to travel back to former scenes, most of them pleasant in their nature.

The engines were working steadily, and he could hear the singular "swish" of the water just beyond the steel shell of the boat alongside his head. How strange it was to realize that he meant to calmly seek forgetfulness in slumber while they were many fathoms under the sea, and traveling along at an eight-knot speed; just as though that had always been the customary method of procedure, instead of a very recent innovation and novelty.

Then finally he lost himself, and during the balance of the night really awoke only three times.

It was on one of these occasions that Oscar knew from a change in the sounds coming to his ears that they were ascending to the surface again. He could hear the throb of the electric motors pumping the water ballast from the reservoirs, which could be emptied in a marvelously short time should necessity compel such haste.

He lay there listening until assured that once again they were afloat on the bosom of the deep, and continuing their voyage. Somehow the full significance of this gave him a sense of relief; it was certainly more natural that they should be

cruising on rather than under the water. And soon fresh air would be circulating through the interior of the boat, when the ventilation shafts were opened.

Then came morning, and the boys upon awaking made all haste possible to get on deck, where they found Captain Shooks, partly dressed, with a glorious red flannel nightcap still covering his bald head, as he took a look around through his glasses.

The boys, too, made use of their opportunity, and scoured the horizon diligently. So far as they could see there was no sign of the suspicious black steam yacht; and it seemed as if they had successfully eluded Badger and his crew.

Over on the port side lay one of those small keys found in many parts of the great Caribbean Sea, with the stately palms hanging over the green water, and the mangroves making another part of the shore look as though it might prove a hard task to break through the thick barrier.

A native was seated in his canoe fishing, and now surveying the singular looking, squatly craft with evident amazement. Even as they looked he started frantically for the shore, as though his fears had finally gotten the best of him. If the mere sight of a submarine gave him such a fright the boys wondered what his sensations would have been had he chanced to see the *Argonaut* suddenly emerge from *beneath* the water like a monster fish, her rounded steel sides glistening in the sunlight.

“Looks like we had given them the slip all right,

eh, boys?" remarked the skipper, as he lowered his glass, and allowed a broad smile to cross his sun-burned face; for already he had come to feel a very friendly relationship toward the trio of fine young fellows, so modest and yet so able.

"We must be in a far corner of the Caribbean by now, I should think, Captain?" Oscar was saying.

"Quite out of the ordinary track of vessels," admitted the commander, nodding his head in the affirmative. "Seldom does a ship pass here, because the region has a bad reputation. You see it is directly in the customary track of all those West Indian hurricanes that are bred around the Windward Islands, make a great curve, and then sweep toward the Florida coast, generally to pass into the Mexican Gulf, though now and then one slips past and goes booming up toward Hatteras."

"And we must be getting near our first destination, too, I should think?" continued Oscar, with the idea of drawing the old skipper out.

"Right you are there, my lad," came the quick reply. "Unless something not down on the bills happens to prevent, I expect that by another sun-down we'll be close on Coco Key," with which parting shot he ducked below, to finish his toilet, and put on his captain's uniform.

That was apparently good news to the three Camera Boys, judging from the way they proceeded to exchange hand-shakes, while smiles illuminated their several faces. And, looking

around upon the vast expanse of salt water by which they were surrounded, they naturally wondered whether that persistent black steam yacht could once more find them out.

CHAPTER VI

TREASURE ISLAND

ALL through that hot day they continued to push ahead. The captain knew where the Key lay that was to be his destination, and being a good mariner, he was laying his course directly thither. By taking the usual observation at noon he found his bearings, and could alter his course more or less in consequence. Then there were small islands they passed from time to time, some of which bore characteristics that he could recognize, either from having seen them before, or because they were thus described on his chart as landmarks.

“The skipper tells me he has sailed all through the Caribbean many a time in years that are past,” Oscar informed his two chums that afternoon, as they sat there on the “hurricane deck” and took things easy.

“I guess it would be hard to mention a particular spot on the globe where the old man hasn’t cruised in his time,” Jack observed. “And how strange it is that of late we should run across two such roamer as our skipper here and Ballyhoo’s Uncle Abner Crawley.”

“Call it three while you’re about it, please, fellows,” interrupted Ballyhoo, “for while we’ve really not actually had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman face to face so far, we feel that we know him just the same, because he keeps haunting our track. I refer to that born trouble-maker and adventurer, Captain Josephus Badger.”

“Oh! there are rafts of just such men in the world!” Oscar declared, “if only you happen across them, fellows who are rolling stones of fortune, seeking spots for their operations where men are at war with their fellows, living by their wits at times, and at others making fortunes by running cargoes of contrabrand goods or arms past a blockade. Right now across in Europe thousands are doing just that same thing, trying to get food and things into Germany through neutral countries, and the open sea.”

“Hello!” exclaimed Ballyhoo just then, “listen, will you, boys?”

“The engines have stopped running!” observed Jack, partly rising to his feet as though to look around and see whether this could be accounted for by anything in sight, and immediately adding: “but there’s only an island some distance beyond, and not a sign of any vessel.”

“Perhaps the engines have broken down?” suggested Ballyhoo.

“A poor guess, I predict,” said Oscar. “They’ve been tested under all sorts of strain, and it isn’t likely they’d go back on us as easy as that. If you asked me now, boys, I’d say that

yonder Key is the one we're aiming to reach, and that our skipper isn't in any great hurry to draw in there before nightfall."

"Just what is in the wind, lad," observed Captain Shooks, who had thrust his head above the combing of the little deck hatch while the boys were exchanging these views. "We'll drop down until we're almost awash, and in that way manage to avoid attracting attention in the gathering darkness, as we approach yon island. Yes, it is Coco Key, marked on our chart as the place for trying out our glorious plans."

Of course this was pleasing news for the three chums. Things were going to take on a substantial change with them. Prowling around there on or near the bottom of the sea, endeavoring to locate the hulk of the treasure ship that was said to have been sunk there many, many years before, they would be also given an opportunity for observing those amazing sights which Jack meant to catch with his magical camera.

So they continued to gaze at the still far distant Key through the glasses. Of course they could not have seen any human being, but Ballyhoo, who really possessed remarkable vision, stoutly declared he could trace a thin column of smoke rising above the tree-crowned isle.

The others being unable to locate this sign of Coco Key being inhabited told Ballyhoo that it must be a vein of clouds he saw; but, nevertheless, he stubbornly persisted in sticking to his assertion.

“You wait and see who’s right, that’s all, fellows,” he told them, for Ballyhoo, as we have seen on other occasions, was a very stubborn chap, and ready to “nail his flag to the mast before giving up the ship.”

So they continued to move on at half speed. So low in the water did the submarine lie that no one without the aid of a good glass could, from the Key, have detected its presence amidst the choppy little waves. And presently, after the sun had sunk amidst the gathering clouds, there was no danger of their coming being known.

After they had eaten their supper the boys once more mounted to the upper deck. It was only natural that they should feel an intense interest in this lonely little Key that lay directly in the path of the hurricanes bred amidst the terrible Windward Islands.

“It seemed to be covered with vegetation, all right,” Ballyhoo was saying, as if that fact caused him to wonder. “You’d think that long ago the storms that cross this stretch of the old Caribbean would have just wiped out every trace of such a little spot of land.”

“Well, there must be some reason why they haven’t,” Oscar advanced. “It may be a reef that lies to the northeast, and protects Coco Key whenever one of those hurricanes swoop down here. I’ve got an idea, though, that they gather force as they go, and are a whole lot worse hundreds of miles further on, when they strike Cuba, or Jamaica, and then sail over to Galveston.”

Although this was just a guess with Oscar, the probability is the boy struck what might be the exact truth. Later on Captain Shooks told them his experience was all along those lines; and that it took those West Indian hurricanes some time to get going at their full force; so the probability was they did not strike Coco Key as furiously as when days afterwards they were reported going at a hundred and ten miles an hour.

All lights were "doused" so that not by a glimmer would their coming be made known. And, sitting there, always watching ahead, it was not a great while after coming on deck that the boys discovered what seemed to be a far distant gleam.

"What do you suppose it can be?" queried Ballyhoo Jones.

"I've held the glasses steadily on it," reported Jack, "and there's no doubt it's a light of some kind, and not a star near the horizon, as I thought at first."

"Could it be a fire on some other island back of Coco Key?" continued Ballyhoo.

"I'd say no to that, and for several reasons," Oscar interrupted. "In the first place you forget that the skipper told us Coco lay all along here in this desolate section of the Caribbean Sea. Then again a fire always wobbles, now bright and again dim. That light is steady, if too far away to be figured out."

"You mean that it must be on some vessel, then, don't you, Oscar?" Jack asked.

"Nothing else," he was told. "The boat must

have been behind the Key when daylight was with us, which would account for our not seeing the same."

"Whew! I bet you it's that Artful Dodger, Captain Badger," ventured Ballyhoo.

"The skipper will be coming up on deck before long," Oscar continued, "and we'll call his attention to the suspicious light. From what he says I don't believe any spongers or loggerhead turtle fishermen could be away over here; though it might be possible. They cruise about everywhere looking for some corner where they can pick up a cargo. These West India 'conchs,' as they call them, are pretty daring chaps, I'm told."

But a short time later Ballyhoo announced that the strange light had vanished, nor did they glimpse it again, though looking many times.

"Chances are the boat has slipped behind the island again," Jack ventured to say, "or else for some reason those aboard have decided they don't need any light, just as we're doing."

While the night was fairly dark, at the same time it was later on possible for them to tell where the island lay. The mass seemed to make a shadow on the water that resembled a dark spot.

"I could just manage to see through the glass," Ballyhoo explained, "that it had trees and scrub, and plenty of those queer mangroves growing all along the edge of the shores. The skipper told us the water was quite deep, too, and that we'd be likely to see all sorts of tropical growth, once we went down."

“Yes, although he hasn’t ever been here before in a submarine,” Oscar went on to say, “he has often looked through a water glass, and hunted for sponges that way, so he knows what these tropical waters can hold.”

“Huh! I was just thinking!” Ballyhoo exclaimed in a stage whisper, “that it looks kind of spooky off yonder toward the Key, as we see it now in this queer light. Oh! did you notice that, boys? Really and truly something flashed up right ashore, then!”

“I saw it, too,” admitted Jack, and Oscar followed with:

“No question about it, the island isn’t as deserted as Captain Shooks thought. It may be that first light came from a sponging vessel anchored on the other side of the Key, and that some of her crew are ashore, meaning to turn turtles when they crawl up on the beach; though it’s generally in the Spring of the year they come out to lay their eggs in the warm sand.”

The skipper, coming on deck just then, was put in possession of such facts as they had accumulated. Apparently he did not much like the news. It would interfere considerably with their intended movements, for they could not very well remain on the surface in the daytime without being seen, and their presence suspected.

To allay any suspicions, in case they met with some cruising pleasure yacht while in the vicinity of the treasure island, the wily captain had laid out a plan of campaign quite original. The boys

entered into it with more or less zeal, since they were always ready for a lark.

Captain Shooks, while an American, could speak German like a born native of the Rhine country, and it was his intention to make frequent use of this language, so as to cause the inquisitive pleasure voyagers to believe the craft to be a hostile German submarine, lying in this isolated quarter to wait for stores and torpedoes, so as to commence a raid on the Allies' oil vessels coming out from Mexican ports with cargoes for the British trade.

The skipper decided that in all probability the explanation given by Oscar to account for the presence of the lights might be the true one. Nevertheless, they must not run any unnecessary chances so early in the game. It might be the *Dauntless* after all, for Captain Shooks had a very great respect for the sagacity of that tricky mariner who commanded the black steam yacht.

And so a little later on he decided they had gone as close to Coco Key as common prudence would dictate. Accordingly, the boys were ordered below, the hatches closed, and the boat sank below the surface of the sea.

Lower than they had ever gone before the boys realized they were dropping, until finally the electric lights were switched on, and looking eagerly out through the observation search ports they could catch their first glimpse of the vast world that lay at the bottom of the ocean.

CHAPTER VII

WONDERFUL UNDER-THE-SEA SIGHTS

THE submarine was moving slowly forward, so that they were being treated to a constant change of scene. It was like a vast panorama being unrolled before their eyes, and for their especial benefit. The three boys clung to their ports of observation, and continued to gaze at the marvelous sights as though fascinated.

They could see as plainly as though looking into one of those aquarium tanks with the glass sides, where all manner of curious fish swim idly back and forth, and rub their noses vainly against the transparent barrier.

“Such gloriously colored fish I never saw before!” Ballyhoo was saying, and the others could easily echo his words, for they discovered some new object of interest with almost each passing minute.

Sometimes these denizens of the depths were of a brilliant scarlet hue; then again they seemed to possess most of the colors of the rainbow, delicately shaded. Others had long waving tails, and

often the boys would discover some ugly looking monster that seemed quite out of place in such splendid surroundings, like an ogre at a feast of fairies.

"There, I saw a shark swing past!" exclaimed Ballyhoo, later on, perhaps with an odd shiver passing over him, for sharks always brought up that little adventure of his.

Jack had already commenced to arrange his camera. Before now he had tried it for height, and hence knew just how to proceed so as to get the proper results.

"Some of these things seem too fine to be lost," he told Oscar, who had his station close beside him. "And as we sink a little lower I begin to notice those waving fields of submarine flowers, or weeds, or plants, whatever you can call them. Any time now we're apt to run into a field that I'd like to get a picture of."

Oscar said nothing to discourage him. In fact, he, too, felt that it was high time they were remembering that the main object of their coming to this part of the Caribbean Sea had been to secure wonderful pictures of the ocean depths and its denizens, rather than to share in the treasure that was the magnet drawing Captain Shooks.

Up in the bow no doubt the skipper was at his post. His was the hand that controlled the destiny of the undersea boat now. It required another sort of education than that of the ordinary pilot's to manipulate the wheel when once down in those depths, where buoyancy could be so easily

altered. To rise or fall was possible by the mere touch of a finger, it seemed, so delicately were they poised there.

Now it became necessary to come to a full stop on account of some obstacle ahead in the shape of an undersea cliff that barred progress. This must be surmounted by pumping out some of the water ballast so that they would rise above its summit, or perhaps it might be deemed advisable to turn aside, and pass around the obstruction.

From time to time Jack's exclamations, and the sound of his cranking, announced that he was busily engaged at his labor of love. If he could only catch some of those wonderful vistas of waving plants, and floating fish with their goggle-eyes, he felt he would be amply repaid for all his work.

"Another shark!" announced Ballyhoo, who seemed to have a good eye for those savage monsters of the deep, "and let me tell you he's some size in the bargain. Oh! get him in the picture, Jack, because we seem to have stopped right here for some reason or other. Don't you see, he must be one of those leopard sharks we've heard Uncle Abner tell about, for he's all spotted."

"I can hardly believe that," Oscar told him, "because, unless I'm mistaken, he also said that species was only to be found away over in the East Indias. But that chap was a dandy, all right, and I hope you got him, Jack."

"Whee! there's another right now!" cried Ballyhoo, "and as sure as you live, boys, he acts like he meant to knock a chip off the shoulder of his

first cousin, too. See him make that furious rush for Mr. Spot, will you? Oh! we're going to be treated to a regular shark duel, that's what we are! Be sure and don't miss that, on your life, Jack. It's all been staged just for our benefit. Those monsters knew it was a chance of a lifetime for them to get in the spot-light!"

While Ballyhoo rattled along at this rate, events outside were taking on a sanguinary hue. Something had happened to anger both of the huge sharks, and they continued to make savage attacks on one another. Their teeth must have been busily engaged in these frequent contacts, for the boys soon saw that they began to show the marks of many terrible wounds.

By now the whole crew of the submarine must have learned of what was taking place close by, for they crowded to the various glass-covered openings in the endeavor to see what they could of the affair. It enlisted their sympathies, even as a group of Cubans might take a lively interest in a cock fight, or ten thousand Mexicans gather to watch a bull match his horns and muscles against the agility of his human baiters in the arena.

Back and forth the pair swam, tearing at each other as though anxious to take advantage of this unusual flood of light visiting their undersea range. One was a little larger than the other, and, of course, the boys immediately allowed their hopes to rest upon the smaller shark.

Indeed, it soon began to prove that this one was

the more agile of the two, and could get away with less punishment after some of their terrific rushes. From this fact the spectators expected that in the end the battle would result in the vanquishing of the larger spotted fish, which appeared a trifle sluggish in its movements.

“You see,” said Ballyhoo, who noted all these points with the eye of a professional, “it’s a heap sight better to be quick and spry than big and powerful. That spotted shark could just lie on the other and squeeze him to death, but he’ll never get the chance. Oh! my stars! what a smash that was, and both of them took a hunk away! Why, they’ll be all torn to pieces if they keep it up much longer.”

“It’s getting near an end right now,” asserted Oscar. “That spotted one is showing signs of being almost all in. A few more such clashes and his name will be Dennis, you mark what I’m telling you, boys.”

“I do believe Captain Shooks has stopped the boat just on purpose to let us get a picture of the shark duel!” cried Jack, who was turning his crank, and at the same time trying to watch what was going on outside, a rather difficult task, all things considered.

“He knows what this must mean to us, that’s right,” asserted Ballyhoo. “Here they come again at it, hammer and tongs. They make me think of some things I once saw in the stock yards I visited with my father when I was smaller, for this is butchery, if ever there could be such a

thing. I'm hoping deep down in my heart that both of them get wiped out, for I haven't any use at all for sharks! Ugh!"

That seemed to be the concluding round to the battle. The two sharks stayed close to each other, and continued to snap viciously; but the jaws of the big spotted one lacked something of their former vigor. Indeed, it could be seen that this fish was at the end of his rope, for he swung this way and that, as though unable to guide his course.

Even as the spectators continued to stare through their glass-covered windows, arranged for this very purpose, and well protected against all pressure to be met with down at the depth to which the boat could be lowered, they saw the larger shark give a last flip with its tail, and then roll over, belly up.

"That settles him, all right!" Ballyhoo was heard saying quite revengefully, just as if he had taken a vow upon himself never to spare a shark when he had a chance to annihilate such a creature.

"But the victor is almost as badly off, you notice," Oscar called out. "See how he wobbles as he starts to swim away. The chances are a hundred to one he'll be attacked by another of his kind before an hour goes by; and if that happens it's good night to the game little chap."

"Well, it was a pretty fast scrap while it lasted," Ballyhoo asserted, "and if we'd staged it ourselves we couldn't have done it any better. The luck of the Camera Boys still holds good,

seems like. Everything comes our way, given time.”

“I only hope my pictures turn out first class,” Jack was heard saying. “You see, I’ve never had any experience taking such through a heavy glass like these observation windows or big bull’s-eyes are made of. Still, everything looked perfectly natural to the eye, as far as I could make out. How about that, boys?”

Oscar, wishing to satisfy the anxiety of the operator, hastened to assure him that all was well.

“If that’s all you’ve got to bother you, Jack, just take it for granted it will be the boss picture,” he went on to say. “Of course, a whole lot depends on whether your focus was good, and if the rising and falling motion of the boat didn’t interfere with first-class work.”

“I’m not afraid of that part,” the other asserted, which ended the talk on that particular subject.

“Now the engines have started up again, you notice,” Ballyhoo announced glibly. “The show being over, that act of it anyway, we mean to commence going on again. What comes next, I wonder? Some terrible monster of this under-the-sea land will perhaps try to knock a hole in the side of our craft, thinking it’s a big whale come down to look the ground over. Be ready for anything, Jack. We’re in this business for thrillers, just remember.”

“And I imagine we’ll have all we want of the same before we’re through with it,” Jack told him

in return, as he once more took up his station at his post, and made ready to turn on the "hand power" when the right occasion arose.

Now that they were moving back and forth, they discovered new and entrancing objects to admire. Captain Shooks was evidently carrying out his announced programme when he said that his line would be to drop down and "comb every foot of the sea bottom around Coco," looking for some sign of that long-lost vessel, the fame of whose treasure-trove had come down in some musty document.

The Company believed there might be an element of truth in the story, and until a thorough investigation had been made the first project of the list would not be abandoned.

Some times they were so near the sea bottom that they actually cruised amidst those strange trees such as mortal eye had possibly never before beheld, their greenish trunks bending as the submarine's nose touched them, just as though they were great canes, and as pliable as reeds.

Other moving objects were encountered from time to time, giant crabs, and singular looking creatures to which the staring boys could give no distinguishing name, because they had never before seen anything similar, nor did they remember having read of such grotesque objects.

CHAPTER VIII

“TALK ABOUT LUCK!”

ALTHOUGH they had been passing through these fields of water ferns and tree-like forms for only half an hour or so, the boys were ready to declare that the reality far exceeded even their most sanguine expectations.

“Of course,” Jack admitted when they commenced talking about their work, and what a satisfaction it was not to be disappointed, “this thing will get a bit monotonous in due course, unless we keep on meeting up with new sights. But then down here in these depths there’s apt to be something novel happening any old time; just as that terrible fight between the two species of sharks turned out.”

“We had the same sort of luck out in Africa, remember,” Ballyhoo reminded the other two chums. “Whenever things got a little dull along would come something out of the ordinary to liven up the show. When we got through taking pictures of all the wild animals that could be met with in the jungle and the forest, why, what followed

but that trip to the black king's kraal, where we saw his army drill, and watched 'em do the Lion Dance to the tune of a horrid din."

The crew had before this fallen away from the ports, and gone back to their customary work. They saw little that was attractive about those waving forests of singular submarine growths; though the prospect of another fight between some of the denizens of the depths would have brought them rushing forward again.

"Notice how the skipper keeps lunging from side to side as we move along?" observed Oscar. "He is scouring the ground as he goes forward. By the time we've made several revolutions around Coco Key we'll know whether there was any truth in that old yarn about the sunken hulk, or not."

"Well," ventured Ballyhoo, with a shrug of his shoulders that was intended to express incredulity, "so far as I'm concerned I reckon it was only a fishy story that some newspaper man got up just to fill space. You never know how much to believe of anything you see in the newspapers nowadays, when the reporters are paid for space."

"The proof of the pudding is the eating of the same," laughed Oscar; "so we'll not quite condemn that yarn until we've proved it to be a bad egg. You'd feel pretty cheap, Ballyhoo, if we really did uncover something in the shape of an old hulk, whether it held any treasure or not."

"Oh! I surely hope they do, for the captain's sake, yes, and for Uncle Abner's, too; because he's

sunk a wheen of good hard cash in this venture, that he may never get back again. With us, now, it's different, I claim, for we're going about a legitimate business. Let us get our pictures, and it's going to line our pockets with gold. That's the way to do things, according to my notion."

"Stop and think," said Jack, "how would we ever have found such a glorious chance to accomplish what we're aiming to do now if it hadn't been for this same wildcat treasure hunting expedition you're harping on? Sometimes it's cruel to look a gift-horse in the mouth, Ballyhoo."

"Kick me, Oscar," said the other contritely, "for I certainly deserve it. And after this I'll try and keep my thoughts to myself, especially when they run counter to the balance of you. Sure I hope the captain'll strike it rich, and locate this Aladdin stuff—or was it King Midas who had everything he touched turned straightway into gold, even the coffee he drank at meals?"

Before either of the others could say another word they all became conscious of a perceptible shock that made the little submarine tremble all over as though stricken by a monster fist.

"Wow! was that my whale butting into us?" gasped Ballyhoo, who had only managed to keep himself from falling by clutching a convenient cleat on the wall.

"We've run up against something that was hidden among the waving, giant water ferns, that's sure!" ejaculated Oscar anxiously.

They listened. Men could be heard calling out

excitedly. The engines had stopped working, and the boys immediately felt a dreadful fear grip their hearts—had the motive power been disabled, and would they be unable to rise again to the surface when the compressed air chambers no longer contained the elements necessary to keep the imprisoned voyagers alive?

They may have remembered how the crew of an ill-fated U. S. submarine out at Hawaii had some accident occur that caused the boat to sink to the bottom of the sea in a deep hole; and that delay in rescuing her imprisoned crew resulted in the death of every one in the doomed boat.

Strange how things like this, common incidents under normal conditions, and simply glanced at in curiosity among other news items, arise to stagger one when suddenly placed in similar distressing conditions.

“Could it be possible for a hole to be punched in the outside shell of our bully little boat?” Ballyhoo wanted to know, and his voice quivered as he asked it.

“Hardly a likely thing,” Oscar told him. “But what I’m really afraid of is that our engines may be knocked galley-west and hurt so badly that the engineer can’t possibly repair the same.”

“As a last resort,” Jack added, seriously enough, “there’s a way of getting out of here through a chamber that can be emptied of water again and again. And once on the surface a fellow could swim to the island all right enough. So you see it hasn’t got to the desperate stage.”

"One of us ought to try and find out what happened, don't you think?" asked Jack.

"Let Oscar do it," suggested Ballyhoo; for somehow it seemed that when something really important had to be carried through the Jones boy felt considerable more confidence in Oscar's ability than in his own.

"All right, I will," promptly spoke up the one indicated. "Both of you stay here so as not to get in the way. This is a tight fit, you must remember, and any useless confusion would be next door to criminal. I'll be back in a jiffy; the chances are nothing so terrible has happened."

With that he left them. Jack and Ballyhoo waited impatiently for his return, and, of course, conjectured all sorts of miserable things. Still, their spirits began to brighten in some degree when they noticed that pretty much all the furore had by now died down.

"Guess we're not taking in water *very* fast, anyhow," said Ballyhoo bravely.

"I haven't seen or felt any leak," agreed Jack, just as if such a thing as flooding the little compartment where they had their bunks were possible without a panic among the crew.

Then came Oscar almost crawling back to them, because passing from one part of the boat to another necessitated considerable of this sort of thing.

"It's good news he's fetching us, I warrant you!" exclaimed the eager Ballyhoo, "because I can see his face all wrinkled up in a smile."

Oscar sank down beside them.

“Well, it seems that we certainly butted into something or other that was quite hidden in among that extra big patch of submarine imitation trees,” he commenced. “The captain doesn’t know just yet whether any damage was done, but they haven’t discovered that we’re taking on any water, and that is a comfort.”

“Bully!” zipped Ballyhoo, drawing in a big breath of relief.

“And the engines, how about them?” demanded Jack.

“Oh! he said they were all right,” Oscar told him. “The engineer shut off power the very instant we rebounded.”

“Lucky we were going pretty slow at the time, too,” Jack added. “If we’d been racing along at top speed it would have been good-night for everybody by now.”

“What do you suppose it was we struck?” asked Ballyhoo.

“Oh! one of those queer ledges that we’ve had to climb over several times before this,” Jack went on to say. “The floor of the ocean isn’t always like a level plain, you know. Sometimes there are hills, and then deep valleys, just as we have them on the land.”

“Somehow or other,” continued Oscar, “Captain Shooks doesn’t quite believe it was hard rock we struck. He says it didn’t just feel like it. Still, down in this section there’s a heap of coquina rock, which you know is really made by myriads

of insects building. It looks like a mass of tiny shells welded together with some sort of cement. The skipper says coquina rock is lots softer than ordinary stone. It may have been a bank of that we ran smack up against."

"Let's hope so, anyhow," said Ballyhoo fervently, "because to have anything injure our boat at this early stage of the game would be terrible. Jack here has only begun to take his under-the-sea motion pictures; and then again nary a cent have the treasure hunters found up to now, to help pay the enormous expenses of the enterprise."

"There, the engines are working again," remarked Oscar. "I suppose the next move will be to draw back out of this mess of giant ferns and other plants ten or twenty feet high. They're all around us, you notice, boys."

The boat was moving slowly, and just as Oscar had supposed would be the case, in a backward direction. It also began to swing to one side so that quite a broad avenue was left behind, showing where they had smashed through the aquatic growth.

During this time the boys had their eyes glued to the observation bull's-eyes as though more than curious to discover what had lain ahead of them. The powerful electric searchlights were turned on again as soon as the engines had started, and they were thus enabled to see with distinctness.

"I can just make out something ahead there, boys!" Ballyhoo was calling out.

"Ditto here," echoed Jack, "and I guess it must

be a bank of that coquina rock Oscar was telling us about. Still, there's something queer about it to me."

"You bet there is," snapped Ballyhoo, as quick as a flash. "I can begin to make out a shadowy outline further on. It rises just so high, and that's all. If that's a rock all I want to say is—why, boys, it looks to me a whole lot like some sort of vessel lying there partly on its side!"

Oscar laughed aloud.

"This is a big joke!" he exclaimed gleefully.

"In what way?" demanded Ballyhoo, still groping for an answer.

"Why, to think that after we've dropped down here with the principal idea of searching the bottom of the sea around Coco Key for a sunken treasure-ship that was said to have foundered here ever so many years ago in one of those hurricanes, we should actually bump the nose of our boat into the same!"

Jack and Ballyhoo uttered exclamations of amazement.

"Talk about luck!" cried Ballyhoo.

"Do you really mean that you think we've found that wreck already?" asked Jack.

"It looks mighty like it," came the steady and confident reply, "for that object we can glimpse there in the midst of the thick growth has all the earmarks of an old hulk that's been lying at the bottom of the sea for scores and scores of years!"

CHAPTER IX

THE DIVER AT WORK

SHORTLY afterwards the captain came along, and they seized upon him. He was looking anything but downcast, and in reply to the flood of eager questions with which the Camera Boys deluged him imparted the information that to the best of his belief they had actually run into the object of their search.

He also told them that it was his intention to stand by the hulk until morning, and then get busy carrying out the plans that had long ago been arranged.

Of course it would not be necessary to remain below during the night, so he was about to give the signal to the engineer and the man at the wheel to rise to the surface; only strict orders were being passed around that the utmost silence must be enforced; all lights, too, were forbidden.

After the skipper had gone on the boys talked it over again.

“Guess he hasn’t forgotten that light on the Key,” remarked Ballyhoo.

“More than likely,” added Jack, “he’s got that sly adventurer, Captain Badger, on his mind. He knows that individual has played many a desperate game, and also how he’s said to be the most tricky subject that ever led an expedition through a blockade.”

“Suppose then that we have come on the old hulk,” Ballyhoo continued, seeking further information, since he was not quite sure in his mind about certain things, “what would be the programme, do you think, Oscar?”

“Oh! that’s all been cut and dried this long while,” he was told. “Of course we would mark the spot where the wreck lies in deep water, so we could find it again, if for any reason we had to cut and run—for instance, if we happened to see that other boat coming along, Oscar.”

“Yes, I understand all that, but how do they expect to get working at the wreck, for I happen to know they have several divers’ suits aboard here?”

“Listen, and I’ll try to explain,” the other went on. “We carry a large number of empty oil barrels in our small cargo space, also planks with which to make a float, just as they do on the lakes in front of hotels and cottages. Get that, Ballyhoo?”

“Surely, and I begin to see that you’re going to say about the diving part of it, too, Oscar. That float will make a working place for the operation.”

“Just what it will,” Oscar further explained. “They have some sort of windlass they use to

help raise the diver, whose armor is terribly heavy, you understand. It is also meant to lift up any cargo the man who goes down may gather while working about the wreck. Sometimes this is heavy machinery, or it may be a ship's safe that they're trying to salvage."

"But will a little float like that stand being knocked about by the waves, for they must run pretty high here sometimes?" Ballyhoo added.

"But those are the times when no work will be attempted," he was told. "There's also a chance, if the wind is coming from the quarter that I think it is, we'll find that the Key itself will act as a buffer to the waves, and on this side it will be almost calm."

"I declare, you seem to think of nearly everything, Oscar," the Jones boy exploded. "Now, the captain said we were to ascend, but so far as I can see we're only moving around to another side of that great bunch of stuff covering the wreck."

"Then I reckon he means to approach from several different quarters," proceeded Oscar, "so as to get an idea of just how it lies. In that way a mistake may be avoided such as would cost us dear in the end."

This sort of procedure continued for nearly an hour. By that time the boys figured that they had run close to the wreck on as many as six different occasions. There was no longer the slightest doubt about the object lodged in the midst of that submarine growth being the hulk of a long sunken

ship. Thanks to the play of their powerful search-light they had been able to make out just how the wreck was lying, and also figure which would be the best method of entering the same, when the diver was sent down.

Finally they changed the programme, and the steady laboring of the electric engines announced that the water ballast reservoirs were being emptied. This meant the captain was bound for the surface again.

So they finally emerged, with every light either fully extinguished or else so effectually concealed that there would not be the slightest chance for a hostile eye to discover their presence there on the water.

An anchor was silently let go, and the submarine lay there, all snug and secure. The boys hastened to get on deck to secure a breath of pure air before seeking their bunks for the balance of the night.

It was just as dark as ever; indeed, after being accustomed to the powerful light that had been used while they were below it seemed worse than before to Ballyhoo, who rubbed his eyes and whimpered that he feared he must be going blind, for somehow he just couldn't see a thing around him.

They had been warned not to converse above whispers, which instructions all of them faithfully carried out. Sounds carry wonderfully over the water, as they very well knew; an oar striking against the side of a rowboat makes a noise that

can be heard a mile away, according to the condition of the atmosphere at the time.

"Look up, and you'll see the stars," Oscar told him. "But it is terribly black around here. I can just barely manage to find where the island lies."

"You don't happen to notice any lights ashore, do you?" asked Ballyhoo, as though he kept that significant fact constantly on his mind.

"Nothing doing," reported the other promptly. "If there are people on the Key, then they've either gone to sleep, or else for some reason are keeping under cover."

The night air seemed damp and chilly after being below so long, and, consequently, the boys soon felt that it would be much more comfortable down in their snug quarters. Besides, Ballyhoo was yawning as though in need of sleep.

"I'm really ashamed of myself to be gaping so," he told the others, "but I just can't help it. Must be something in the sea air around here that makes me so terribly sleepy."

So they presently left the "hurricane deck," and shortly afterwards crawled into their berths. The last Oscar knew of anything the boat was gently moving up and down on the long night swell of the sea, broken somewhat by the Key near at hand.

Then morning came, and once more they were on deck, for the submarine had remained on the surface, showing that Captain Shooks anticipated no serious interruption to his work of the day.

Now they could, for the first time, plainly see

the little island Coco Key. It was not much to look at, a mere hump covered with heavy growth of trees and brush. A few palmettoes, and several beautiful cocoanut trees stood up above the rest of the vegetation, and the presence of the latter doubtless accounted for the name that had been given to the place.

Perhaps it may have been a couple of miles at the most in circumference, counting all the little bayous along the shore. In many places the edge of the water was covered with those singular trees known as mangroves, which can be found all over southern Florida wherever salt water abounds. Their seed grows in the shape of a catalpa "cigar," so well known to most boys. This drops into the soft mud at low tide, and roots spring from it in an incredibly short time, so that another tree is started. Thus they spread and thrive until they form a veritable thicket.

In Florida at a certain season of the year the leaves seem to exude a sticky, sweet substance that the bees gather, and which forms the basis for tons and tons of mangrove honey.

The boys looked long and earnestly at that island. Ballyhoo in particular seemed to still entertain certain suspicions regarding its being as peaceful and innocent as outward appearances would indicate.

"I see the skipper has sent out the collapsible boat," he went on to say, almost as soon as they reached the deck; "but it doesn't look as if the two men in the same meant to land on the Key

after all, for they're rowing off at right angles to the land."

"I can give a guess what's in the wind," said Oscar.

"Oh! that's easy," added Jack. "Captain Shooks wants to make sure that there's no boat belonging to spongers or turtle hunters anchored on the other side of the island; so he's sending out his men to row completely around the same, and make a sure job of it before he starts to work."

"He'll have his trouble for his pains, I feel sure," Oscar continued, "because only a fool would anchor his boat on the windward side of a Key like this, when he had the choice of getting in its lee."

Half an hour later the boat came in sight again, and from the opposite quarter, showing that the men had, indeed, gone completely around the Key. They reported the coast as clear, though, of course they had made no landing. While there were numerous little indentations in the shore line, still the trees and mangroves were not high enough to conceal a schooner, or even one of the native boats with a mast.

As though this settled the matter in his mind the skipper immediately gave orders for work to be commenced. The empty and watertight barrels were first of all brought out, and thrown overboard, though secured together. Then the carpenters got busy, and the sound of hammering told that they were making the indispensable float.

It was soon a busy scene, indeed, and half of the morning went by before the object of their industry took on the desired shape. Care was taken to make everything as secure as possible, so that it could withstand considerable pounding.

Finally this part was finished, and even the windows and air pump put in place. All was now in readiness for the diver, and one of the two men who had been engaged for this special work began to don his strange garments, his heavy shoes being weighted with lead, and, to cap all, the helmet, from which ran the air pipes.

Jack, desirous of catching the full spirit of the occasion, had taken his camera in the small boat, with Ballyhoo to do the rowing, and pulling off just a little distance proceeded to faithfully record all that went on. It would, he believed, make an interesting and instructive picture. Then, besides, every stockholder in the enterprise could later on see just how his money was being expended in the effort to locate and recover long lost treasure.

The diver finally went over the side of the raft, and vanished from view with only a mass of bubbles on the surface to indicate where he had gone down. Minutes dragged along, and the men kept working at the pump so as to keep the diver supplied with plenty of fresh air; though, in case of necessity, he could depend on the small amount of compressed air which he carried in a special reservoir.

In the end the long expected signal came, telling that he wished to be raised. Jack was waiting

to get that part of it, so as to complete his picture of "going down and coming up." When the man finally appeared, and his helmet was removed, all on the float gathered anxiously around to hear what he had to report.

CHAPTER X

SPIED UPON

AFTER all the diver was not prepared to give any positive report. He had found it a difficult job to get aboard the old hulk, which he said must have lain there many, many years, for it seemed to be of a model that had been in vogue away back in the days when Spanish galleons carried cargoes of gold and silver stolen from the Mexicans across to Spain, many of the clumsy sailing craft being lost on the way.

The presence of part of a high afterdeck betrayed the fact that it belonged to that type of vessel, he told them. At which the captain shot Oscar a look of grim delight, for doubtless he anticipated great things to come.

All of them were of the opinion that they had actually come upon the wreck of the chart, and hopes ran high. The second diver was now ready to take his turn below. Time was a factor in the game. They were in the hurricane belt, and though the period of the year when these "twisters" are supposed to come out of the Windward

Islands had passed, still occasionally one is belated.

There were other reasons, too, why they should not dally. One of these went by the name of Badger, and as such might be set down as a constant menace. All day long they must scan the horizon, looking for any sign of an approaching boat. Should such be discovered, haste would be made to dismantle the float, so that all signs of their recent labors might be destroyed, after which the submarine could drop out of sight.

In one quarter only could they see what appeared to be another Key. It lay about ten or twelve miles away, possibly further, since distances are so deceptive over the water.

This time it was the design of Captain Shooks to sink the submarine, so that the diver might have the benefit of the electric searchlight, which would aid him in his work very much indeed.

Jack went down with the boat, desirous of adding to his interesting collection of sub-aqueous pictures. It was worth something to actually see the diver, clad in his suit, handling an axe in the water, just as though he might be a woodchopper in the forest attacking a tree.

But it needed a very powerful man to wield that axe, such was the resistance of the water. Blows that required every ounce of strength he could put in them made but a faint impression.

The wreck, as could be easily seen, lay partly on its side. On this account it was necessary to fashion some sort of rude ladder by means of

which the diver could climb up to one of the openings in the deck.

All these years the sea had preserved the vessel, so that it was in almost as good condition as when it went down with its cargo and crew. Fishes had swarmed out of the hulk, and great stone crabs, with monstrous, threatening claws, backed off as the diver made his way about. He never knew what strange and horrible sea monsters he might disturb after entering the interior of the wreck, one end of which was partly buried in the sand.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when for the fourth time the submarine ascended to the surface, the captain wishing to get the report of the man who was just then going up. He had managed to get part way inside the hulk, and it was possible that he might be in a position to tell something encouraging.

Oscar and Ballyhoo had remained above this time, and when Jack came out on deck he was just in time to discover them rowing toward the island in the small, collapsible boat.

“Please wait for me,” he called out. “I’d like to go along, and take my box with me. I ought to get a view of things from a little distance, so as to take in the whole outfit, with the sea for a background, if you can call it that.”

Accordingly, the other pair came back, and shipped Jack, together with his inseparable companion, that wonderful box with its crank, necessary machinery, and fine lens.

They leisurely pulled to the shore. A small, sandy beach offered an inviting landing place, and the light boat soon ran up on the gentle slope. Then some time was spent in watching Jack get busy, though after he had once found his focus he soon secured all he wished in order to complete his picture.

“Do we go back now?” asked Ballyhoo. “It feels so jolly just to stretch your legs on solid ground again after all the time we’ve been cooped up in those narrow quarters that I’d like to stay ashore a while, if it’s all the same to you, Oscar.”

“I was going to suggest that we start out and explore the Key,” the one addressed went on to say, at which Ballyhoo grinned amiably, and nodded his head.

“Good idea, too,” he hastened to observe. “We’ve never had a chance before to see what one of these sandy Keys is like. And from the looks of things, now we’re close in, it wouldn’t be such a tough job to break through that scrub. Most of the thick growth, it seems, is in the mangrove thickets along the shores.”

“Will you come along with us, Jack?” asked Oscar.

“Please excuse me, boys,” the other replied. “This camera weighs a whole lot, as you both know, and it’s a pretty hot day in the bargain. I wouldn’t like to leave it behind, because we only fetched the one with us this time, and if anything happened to injure it my cake would be all dough.”

"Perhaps you're sensible, after all, Jack," laughed Oscar. "We may be sorry we started before we get through with the job."

"If we find the going hard through the island," said Ballyhoo shrewdly, "why, we could come back along the beach, mebbe. But shucks! there isn't going to be any difficulty at all. Still, I'm curious to know what that smoke I saw meant."

At hearing him say that Jack spoke up.

"I'm glad you thought it worth while to fetch your rifle along with you, Oscar, because if anything should happen, and you did run across some hard characters, they'd find you armed."

"Oh! give Ballyhoo credit for thinking about the gun," replied Oscar; "but if we mean to get back before sunset, Ballyhoo, we'd better be starting."

They left Jack sitting there near the boat, and "fiddling" with his camera, as Ballyhoo always called it when the artist chose to manipulate certain screws, or make any sort of changes to suit his whim.

"Why, this isn't half bad, after all, Oscar!" the Jones boy declared after they had been moving along for some little time, keeping their faces in the one set direction, which was easily done, since they had the sun to guide them.

"A regular picnic, I should call it," the leader said over his shoulder.

Some time afterwards Oscar reached the conclusion that they must be drawing near the opposite side of the Key, having gone directly across

it from end to end. The breeze was rustling the serrated leaves of the palmettoes, and waving the long fronds of the cocoanut trees, showing that there was quite a little air stirring at this end of the island, even while it seemed calm where they were working.

Suddenly Oscar stopped dead in his tracks.

“Did you hear anything then, Ballyhoo?” he asked.

“I certainly did,” came the reply, “and it sounded mighty like an oar hitting the side of a boat, in the bargain.”

“Just what I thought,” continued the other. “Come, let’s creep forward and take a look out. I expect we must be close to the beach that I’ve figured lies at this end of the Key, protected by a reef or two further off.”

Accordingly, they continued to advance, their eyes constantly on the lookout for any sign of life beyond. Then they began to catch glimpses of the water, showing that at this end of the Key the thick mangroves did not grow at all.

“I can see green cocoanuts up there, hanging in clusters on those trees,” whispered the observant Ballyhoo; for it had been one of his most ardent hopes that while on this expedition to the semi-tropics he might have the pleasure of knocking down a green cocoanut himself, and trying to see what the mushy contents tasted like; for all his experience hitherto had been with the ripened nuts of commerce, with their milk, and hard rim of meat.

"Never mind that just now," warned Oscar, in a whisper, "for we've got other fish to fry. There, I heard that sound again, only further away. And when that rustle among the leaves quiets down it strikes me I catch the splash of oars."

"There's something doing, as sure as eggs are eggs," muttered Ballyhoo, even as the pair of them crept further on, and by degrees began to get a clearer view of the pretty sandy beach, as well as the open sea beyond.

"I see the boat!" snapped Ballyhoo suddenly.

"Not so loud, please," warned his companion; "and don't move again if you can help it. The men who are rowing have their faces turned this way, and might discover us."

So Ballyhoo crouched there and hurriedly began working at the marine glass case, which he had slung over his shoulder. Presently he brought the contents out, and commenced adjusting the glasses to suit his eyesight, knowing just about how far to lengthen them.

"Fortunately, the sun is almost back of us," Oscar was saying, "and on that account it couldn't flash from the glass, and make them take notice. But don't move too hurriedly, whatever you do, Ballyhoo. Plenty of time to get there safe and sound."

Both of them took a look through the glasses.

"One thing sure," Ballyhoo was saying, excitedly, "they're no sponger crowd nor yet turtle hunters."

"That goes without saying," Oscar told him.

“One look at the boat would tell the story, for you can see it’s a fine mahogany one, and a small gasoline launch at that.”

“There are three men aboard, two of them using the oars, and the other sitting in the stern-sheets taking care of the rudder. I can see him looking back most of the time, as if he wanted to steer in a certain course, so as not to come out where our people on the float might glimpse the launch. But I say, Oscar, tell me, will you, what are those ninnies doing all that rowing for when they could go off in fine style if they only started up their engine?”

“For the same reason, I take it, Ballyhoo, that the steersman is keeping the Key between himself and our float—he doesn’t want to have his presence known if he can help it. And you ought to remember, that muffler or no muffler, most of these gasoline engines have a way of making a great puttering noise when they work. Why, you can sometimes hear them three miles away. Perhaps a little later they’ll think it safe to start up.”

“They’re heading right for that other Key far away off yonder, too, Oscar. Here, take the glasses and see for yourself. Well, this *is* a great mystery, believe me.”

A minute later and Oscar uttered a snort as of satisfaction.

“The boat turned just then, when one of the men stopped rowing to light his pipe, and I had a chance to make out a name that is painted up at

the bow," was what he told his mate, who, of course, immediately exclaimed:

"And what was that name, Oscar—the *Dauntless*?"

"You have said it, Ballyhoo, for that was just what I saw there," said Oscar.

CHAPTER XI

EQUAL TO THE EMERGENCY

“WHEE! then there’s a nigger in the woodpile, I should say!” burst out the impulsive Ballyhoo. “That smart old Badger has been too tricky for our skipper. Why, if those fellows have been on the island all the while, of course it’s dollars to doughnuts they’ve watched everything we’ve done, and know that we’re working on that old hulk of a wreck!”

“No doubt about it,” said Oscar promptly, shutting his jaws together in the way his chums knew meant business.

“What ought we to do about it, Oscar?” continued Ballyhoo.

“First of all we must get across to our boat in as big a hurry as we can,” came the answer. “Captain Shooks ought to know what’s in the wind, so he can act.”

“What d’ye suppose he can do about it?” continued the Jones boy.

They had already turned, and were making off

hastily; and their last glimpse of the retreating boat showed them the two men handling the oars just as carefully as before.

“We’ll have to wait and see,” snapped Oscar. “But don’t talk any more than you can help, Ballyhoo; we’ll need all our wind for running.”

They had one advantage, since in returning they followed the tracks they had made in coming. Thus they could avoid certain obstructions that had delayed them more or less on the former occasion.

Arriving at the other end of the island they found Jack sitting there, still busily engaged with his camera. He had evidently taken what pictures he wanted, and was amusing himself while waiting for the return of his chums.

Upon seeing the pair come rushing out of the palmetto scrub he scrambled to his feet, looking more or less alarmed.

“What is it—a bear, or a wildcat?” he demanded, starting to place his precious camera and tripod in the boat, so as to be ready for a hasty departure.

“Get away from here in a hurry, Jack!” gasped Ballyhoo; “we’ve seen something that threatens all sorts of tough things, and Captain Shooks ought to know about the same.”

The boat was launched without loss of time, Ballyhoo even wading in the wash of the sea up to his knees, in order to shove off, for that was the kind of a fellow the Jones boy was.

Then the paddles fairly flew, and they sped out

toward the spot where the float and the squatly submarine lay. How fortunate, Oscar told himself as he worked his paddle, that the undersea boat chanced to be on the surface just then. Had it been otherwise the delay consequent upon getting their message to the skipper might have made all the difference imaginable with regard to results.

Captain Shooks was on the float talking with the diver, who had apparently just before come to the surface. Oscar noticed that the bronzed face of the skipper appeared to be wreathed in a broad smile, as though he had received some happy news in the report of the diver.

As the three boys hastened to climb aboard the float, he called out to them:

“Well, we’ve struck oil, lads! What d’ye think of that for a starter, now?”

He was holding something out toward them, and the boys could see first of all that it required an effort for him to do so, as though the brick-like object might be quite heavy. They stared hard at it. So far as a first look went there did not seem to be anything very remarkable about the thing. It had a peculiar, greenish look, as though the action of the sea water had covered it with a slime in all the long years that it had lodged there far down in the depths.

“What is it?” asked Ballyhoo eagerly, yet evidently puzzled to guess the truth.

“Bullion!” said Captain Shooks with a queer chuckle, “some of the bully stuff that we organ-

ized this expedition to find. And Hicks here says there's more down in the bowels of the old Spanish galleon where he got this, much more!"

"Oh! what d'ye think of that, now?" cried Ballyhoo, reaching out his hands for the weighty object, and showing by his actions as soon as he received it that he had all he could do to hold the same, it was so heavy.

Jack, like the investigating fellow that he had always proved in the past quickly snatched out his knife, opened the big blade, and commenced scratching the back of the dull-looking brick. Immediately they caught a bright sheen wherever the edge of the blade pursued its activities.

"You're right, Captain, it's gold!" gasped Ballyhoo, grinning as though he had seen one of his most wonderful dreams come true.

They all stared at the bullion. Perhaps through Oscar's imaginative mind there may have flashed a strange picture just then. Remembering all he had ever read concerning the doings of those old-time worthies who defied the perils of the sea in those early days, he saw this same precious metal handled by men in odd, picturesque dress, carrying long swords, and wearing hats adorned with waving feathers—those reckless conquistadores, in fact, who raided both Mexico and Peru under such leaders as Cortez and Pizarro.

Possibly for a brief space the scroll of time seemed to unroll before the boy's vision, and he peopled that float with those ancient worthies, all carrying just such weighty bricks of gold, seized

from the stores of the poor natives, and meant to be carried across the sea to Spain.

Then he came to himself with a shock. The presence of that modern miracle boat capable of descending to the bottom of the sea told him that he was living in the Twentieth Century, and not away back there in those primitive days.

Yes, and he also remembered something else—those three spies in the little motor launch, who had evidently been watching their operations until assured that they possessed accurate knowledge of the location of the lost galleon—they were even now on the way to carry the news to Captain Badger.

“But we have come to give you warning, Captain!” he hurriedly exclaimed, while, of course, Jack listened eagerly, being almost eaten up with curiosity to know what it really was had frightened his two chums.

“What’s that you say, lad?” cried the skipper, recovering the precious bullion.

“We made a discovery while ashore,” Oscar went on. “As we drew near the other end of the Key we heard the sound of oars, and then saw a boat that had just left land.”

“Then there *were* people on the island after all,” snapped the captain, frowning, as though now it was too late, he regretted that he had not gone ashore in the first place, and closely examined every rod of ground before commencing operations; for, as Ballyhoo afterwards remarked, Captain Shooks was like most folks whose “hind-

sight was a heap better than their foresight."

"Yes, and they were no turtle hunters or spongers either," blurted out Ballyhoo, desirous of having a hand in divulging the great news. "The boat was a small launch that could be rowed, and had one of those overboard motors at the stern. Yes, and when it swerved Oscar here, through our glasses, saw the name painted at the bow. It was *Dauntless*, Captain; what d'ye think of that, now?"

The gruff skipper said something pretty strong, but it seemed to express the state of his feelings to a fraction. From the way in which he glanced down at the relic just recovered from the wreck, it was plain to be seen he felt doubly furious to have such a thing as this happen just when they had commenced to strike "pay dirt."

"They've been keeping tabs on us, then, the snakes!" he growled.

"All day long, I reckon," admitted Oscar, "and finally, after making sure that we meant business, and had found a wreck of some kind, they've started off to tell that Badger man, so he can come bullying around here, and chase us away by a show of force."

Ballyhoo looked disconsolate. Already in imagination he possibly saw the black steam yacht tied up to their float, with divers going down to loot the prize at the bottom of the sea, which had lain there hundreds of years, and might have continued to defy all the efforts of ambitious mankind to locate the same only for the enterprise of the

“Argonaut Submarine Diving-Boat Company.”

“Which way were they heading?” demanded the skipper, grinding his teeth hard together, and looking as though he could “bite a ten-penny nail in two,” as Ballyhoo would have put it.

“Trying to keep the land between themselves and our float here,” explained Oscar, “but we guessed they meant to swing around some, and put for that other Key after they thought they were so far away we wouldn’t hear the putter of the motor when muffled.”

“And using only the oars, you say?” continued the other, eagerly.

“Yes, sir, not making any desperate hurry,” replied Oscar.

“That settles it,” ground out the skipper. “We’ve got to overtake that crowd unless we want to have all our plans knocked galley-west.”

Turning, he proceeded to give orders to the man who acted as his mate.

“Send Finnegan down right away, and rush things like hot cakes, d’ye hear? We’ve got to get our hands on all this stuff that’s lying around loose, and save our bacon. If it’s necessary, I’ll take my turn at the job; which wouldn’t be the first time I’d been down below.”

Then once more addressing the boys, he went on to say:

“Get aboard the boat, lads; and you men hoist the collapsible on deck. We may have need of the same to pick up some poor chaps swimming in the sea!”

Ballyhoo was thrilled by hearing the captain say this. He guessed that the energetic skipper meant to adopt stern means in order to block the game of the enemy.

They all hastened to comply with his wishes, for every minute was precious. If those spies had already started to make use of their little overboard motor they would be speeding along at the rate of at least eight miles an hour; but then the submarine was capable of doing twice that, so before a great while the fugitive craft could be overhauled.

Apparently, there promised to be some lively times ahead. From what Captain Shooks had said, Ballyhoo surmised it was his intention to actually run the launch down, after which they would, of course, do their best to pick up the survivors. These were drastic methods of meeting the schemes of Badger's men, but the conditions required heroic measures.

Hardly had the boat been lifted aboard the submarine, and lines cast off than the engines started up, and they began to leave the float with its occupants behind.

"Now for some rattling pictures, Jack," said Ballyhoo; "get ready to grab everything that goes on, because it's going to be a thriller, unless I miss my guess."

CHAPTER XII

THE WATER CHASE

THOSE on the "hurricane deck" waited eagerly to see what would meet their vision as soon as the submersible rounded the lower end of the island. They were now gliding swiftly along, and presently the last of the palmettoes and mangroves would be passed, when, doubtless, a full sweep of the sea beyond must reward them.

"There they are, Captain!" cried Ballyhoo, pointing.

The boat lay in full sight, with its stern toward them. Already those in the small cedar launch must have taken the alarm, knowing full well that pursuit would follow discovery. Plainly the little popping sound of the exhaust connected with the overboard motor came to the ears of the boys, showing that the man in the stern had instantly set his engine going, and was leaving the muffler open in the hope of gaining a little additional speed.

So the chase began, for the submarine was now heading directly after the launch, and throwing off a white "bone" from her squat bow.

"Whoo! we're gaining hand over fist on the

bally thing!" asserted the Jones boy, after a couple of minutes had elapsed, and there was a chance to make comparisons.

Everybody could see that this was so; even the three men in the launch must have realized that it was only a question of time when the submarine would overtake them.

"That man in the stern is crouching there as if he meant to do something, Captain!" called out Ballyhoo; while Jack was grinding away at his crank, and getting it all in for future reference; because they would doubtless often wish to recall these tempestuous happenings when once more safe at home, and the living, moving thing must far excel mere word painting.

"I saw a little flash then," asserted Oscar, "as if he gripped something in his hand. I wouldn't be surprised now if he had a weapon of some sort, perhaps a revolver!"

"Do you believe he'd actually *shoot* at us?" asked Jack, doubtless thinking more about his camera than himself, should hostilities open.

"Better be ready to duck down in case he does," warned the captain. "That Badger generally surrounds himself with the same kind of men he is himself; and he'd shoot at the drop of the hat. But we'll soon fix that bunch, don't forget it."

The efforts of the three men in the little cedar launch to escape were almost pitiful, Oscar thought. Still, they could not attempt a thing to increase their speed, for the motor was doing its best already.

All of them seemed to crouch there, and wait for what was going to happen. Possibly the man at the stern expected that the submersible would try to draw up alongside, meaning thus to capture the motor-boat; and it may have been his intention, by a quick flirt to one side, to avoid the contact. Thus by playing at a game of hide-and-seek, and by clever dodging, they might be able to defy the efforts of the others to capture them.

Straight at the launch pushed the larger boat. The distance had been cut down to one-third by now. Those on the deck of the submarine could see the faces of the three men clearly, and note the looks of anxiety that had settled there as they watched the rapid overhauling of their craft.

“Hey! better keep away, Captain Shooks!” shouted the one in the stern, waving the object he held in his hand, and which the boys could now see was indeed an automatic pistol, a dangerous looking weapon in the bargain.

“Get out of the road, you lubbers!” roared the skipper, as though in anger; “don’t you see we’re in a hurry? What d’ye mean blocking our way like that?”

It must have burst upon the minds of the three men in the small boat what fate was in store for them, and that the submarine captain fully intended to run them down. The two in the middle of the boat acted as though ready to jump overboard at the last moment, rather than remain to take the chances of being hit by the bow of the rushing submersible.

That fellow at the motor was made of different stuff, however. He immediately raised his arm as though bent on carrying out his loud threat.

“Drop down, lads!” cried Captain Shooks, who thus showed that he could be discreet as well as reckless.

All of them hastened to obey, that is, all but Jack, who, despite the danger, continued grinding away as though bent on accepting all sorts of risks rather than spoil so good a picture by “stops.”

Then came the sharp report of the automatic. Jack involuntarily ducked, as though willing enough to make as small a target as possible for the excited marksman. It seemed as though the man either did not mean to do any deadly damage for fear of the immediate consequences, or else had his aim badly shaken by the jarring of the wildly running little motor.

Things had by this time reached a crisis, and the result must be a collision between the two craft. At the very last the wheelsman had attempted to make a quick swerve, abandoning his weapon in order to pay attention to his boat, but it was useless.

The man in the conning tower of the submarine had his orders, and knew just what was expected of him. There followed a loud crash as the blunt bow struck the small motor-boat squarely in the centre. Two figures were seen flinging into the sea on one side, and almost like magic the cedar motor-boat, splintered by the shock, sank under the agitated waves.

Immediately the submarine was stopped almost in its own length.

“We’ve got to rescue those poor chaps!” cried Oscar involuntarily, for all of them had been thrilled by the catastrophe.

“There, I can see one of them over yonder!” called out Ballyhoo; “and he’s waving his hand to us as if he feared we’d run along and leave him out here. Hurry, boys, and get around to him, because he acts like he might be hurt, or else can’t swim very well.”

“And I can see the other sailor now,” added Oscar, “just to one side of the first one. They both act as if they wanted to surrender. It’s a long way to land, and then only the Key would be left after all, where we could easily find them.”

The submarine by this time was making a turn, and heading back to the spot where the collision had occurred. So far only those two men, together with a few things connected with the sunken motor-boat could be seen floating around—a couple of cork cushions, and some parts of woodwork that had been broken clear of the wreck.

As for the boat itself it had completely vanished, such was the tremendous impact with which the onrushing submarine had struck.

After making a turn they were now pushing toward the two sailors in the water. These fellows made no attempt to swim off toward the island, but seemed satisfied to “tread water,” and wait to be picked up. They could not believe those on the submarine meant them any further harm,

since by this "accident" they had been deprived of all chance to carry their information to the one who employed them.

"Where did that third man go to?" asked Ballyhoo, suddenly remembering that there had been still another aboard the ill-fated launch.

Oscar pointed toward the Key.

"If you will look yonder you'll glimpse him," he went on to say. "He's swimming for all he's worth, and now he's bobbed under just like a wounded duck."

"What a silly fool," laughed Ballyhoo, "to think he could fool us that easy. Why, even if he did manage to land we'd soon hunt him out. But he's built on that order, you see, and won't give up till the last horn blows."

"We know another fellow who often shows just the same stubborn nature," chuckled Jack, "without mentioning names either."

Now they had reached the two sailors, and as the boat drew alongside they managed to reach the hands that were held down to assist them. So they were dragged on to the lower deck, dripping wet, and looking as though they hardly knew what they might expect afterwards.

Captain Shooks roared out an order, and at once the submarine started after the man who was swimming toward the island, as best he could with his clothes on. He kept on with gallant overhand strokes, and was making quite fine progress. If left to his own devices there could be little doubt he might have easily reached his goal, the island

from which his recent start had been made.

"He acts like he was keeping tabs on us, all right," said Ballyhoo, "and means to dive to one side as soon as we get a certain distance away."

"And there he goes right now!" added Jack, covering the spot with his finder, and using his crank energetically to show the sudden disappearance of the fugitive.

Captain Shooks seemed to be in a merry mood again.

"We'll give him all the chase he wants," he told the boys. "I was always said to be the most accommodating man alive. With those clothes dragging him down, he's apt to throw up the sponge pretty soon. It stands to reason he can't hold out long."

The boys reasoned along the same lines. Ballyhoo was for launching the collapsible, and in this way increasing their force; but Oscar told him there would be no need. Besides, the chances were that if they came upon the man, in his anger he would try to upset them, or damage the light canvas tender of the submarine.

"Better leave it to the skipper, fellows," he went on to explain; "he knows what he's doing, and can gauge that swimmer's powers of resistance better than we could. We'll get him all in good time, never fear."

The man in the water gave them a good healthy chase before he found himself getting so exhausted that it was risky to try any longer. What with swimming and diving he had to be in con-

stant motion; and just as the captain said his soaked garments were pulling dreadfully upon his reserve stock of strength.

“He’s nearly all in now, let me tell you,” Ballyhoo was saying at last, “and he’s a regular corker when it comes to water dodging. I’ve learned a few things right here by watching his ways. Yep, there he’s holding up his hand, which means he is ready to come aboard, if we draw closer. Well, he’s won the right to be treated decently as a prisoner of war.”

The boy’s words only prove how every one seems to admire the fellow who puts up a stiff fight. Toward the coward who runs away, even a boy like Ballyhoo could feel only detestation.

So the boat moved ahead, and then the swimmer was hauled aboard. He had a sarcastic grin on his face, as, dripping, he finally stood there. Captain Shooks brushed up to him and thrust out a huge paw.

“Shake hands, you!” he told the latest arrival; “you put up a game fight, and that’s the kind of man I take off my hat to. Guess you’ve been taking lessons from your old piratical boss, Badger, because he’s always had the reputation of being a hard loser.”

At least the man had the good sense to understand it would be wise to make the best of a bad bargain, so he accepted the skipper’s hand.

CHAPTER XIII

RECOVERING THE TREASURE

“YOU’LL have to pay for that boat, Captain Shooks!” said the officer; for the boys had seen some time before that the man in the stern of the cedar motor-boat was dressed in some sort of blue uniform, and wore a cap with gold braid, though this latter had been lost when he went overboard at the time of the crash.

The skipper of the submersible laughed good-naturedly.

“Oh! my company will be only too glad to settle your bill, Mr. Anstey,” he said. “I remember you now, and also that once on a time we were both working for the Hecla people. I was sorry to have to smash into you like that, but it was unavoidable. When two old filibusters like Badger and me get to swapping blows, it’s going to be a case of ‘dog eat dog.’ You had it in for me, and I played you a trick worth two of yours, that’s all.”

“But it’s a nice situation of affairs,” blustered the other, as though trying to make the most of

a bad situation, "when a peaceable man can't travel on the high seas, and minding his own business at that, without having a reckless pirate run him down, and nearly drown his crew."

"Oh! tell that to the marines, Mr. Anstey," laughed the skipper. "You were minding some other peoples' business all the time you hid there on that Key, and watched what we were doing. And you meant to carry the news to Badger, sure you did, only my young friends here happened to go ashore, and saw you starting off. So since it would ruin some little plans of ours if you ever got back to Badger, I made up my mind you'd stay with me as my guests until we'd sucked the orange dry."

"Then you have found something, have you?" asked the other quickly.

"Take it out in guessing," he was drily advised by Captain Shooks, who saw no reason for telling all he knew.

"And you're going to keep us aboard your old tub, are you?" continued the other, as he glanced at the homely looking undersea boat, which, when compared with the jaunty steam yacht on which he served, might be compared to a canal-boat.

"Tub or not," said the skipper grimly, "it's built for the sort of work we're doing right now. And what's best of all, when we don't want any spies to take a look in on us we just give a kick, and go down fifty or a hundred feet below, to stay there as snug as you please for hours and hours."

"Well, you've got us, all right, and I suppose

we'll have to make the best of a bad bargain, Captain Shooks. But I give you fair warning that I mean to escape the first chance I get."

"Thank you for telling me," laughed the other; "I'll make sure that your chance doesn't arrive until we're all through here. I reckon now your craft is hiding over behind yon Key to the north-east of us?"

"You wouldn't expect me to tell you that, Captain," replied the other, shutting his lips together resolutely.

"And it also seems," continued Shooks, "that you suspected pretty strong like that Coco Key was going to be our first stop; so Badger ran down here ahead of us, sent three men ashore in that mosquito craft, which could be hidden among the reeds and mangroves, and then made for the shelter of that other Key to wait for news; is that right, Mr. Anstey?"

"Nothing to say," the other snapped.

"Well, I'll give orders to have a place fixed for you down below," continued the captain, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "There you'll have to stay, and eat your three meals a day, until we're ready to pull out of here, when mebbe I'll put you ashore with some grub, and maroon you there. But you'll not be given a chance to spy on us or get away, make up your minds to that."

"Better than we could have looked for, under the circumstances," admitted the officer, doubtless knowing how much more severely his commander would likely have acted under similar conditions,

for Badger was known as a cruel as well as daring adventurer.

They were now well on the way back to the island, around which their course would take them, until once more the float made of empty oil barrels and planks had been regained.

Since the spies had already watched them making this, and knew everything excepting the very last discovery, there was no need to hurry them below. Captain Shooks, however, was not the man to take chances. He understood that Anstey was likely to attempt any sort of sudden, desperate move if by so doing he thought he could cripple their industry, and give his commander a better opportunity to win out.

“We’ll just tie your hands behind your backs, my friends,” he told the trio, “for I wouldn’t like to tempt you to get in worse trouble. You can sit here a little while, and I’ll see that the cargo hold is arranged for your accommodation. You’ll have to get used to the darkness, for I’ll give you no light except a hand torch to use when you are being fed. That goes, you understand?”

None of the three made any attempt to rebuff the sailor who brought stout cord and fastened their wrists behind their backs. They understood that any foolishness on their part would only arouse the tiger in the skipper, causing a frown to take the place of that smile.

Meanwhile, those on the float were working industriously away. One of the divers had gone down again, and the other was sitting there with

his helmet removed, taking in great draughts of fresh air, and looking to the time when he might be called on to once again go down.

While the captain was still below with a couple of his crew, superintending the arrangements in the hold that had contained the barrels and planks, it happened that the diver, who was down, gave a signal, and those on the float commenced hauling at a rope.

“Hello! something’s coming up!” exclaimed Ballyhoo; and with that all of them crowded to the side of the little deck to watch, the three prisoners as well as Oscar and his chums.

The men had no trouble as long as the bag was in the water, but as soon as they attempted to raise it to the float it became necessary for both to exert themselves to the utmost.

Then the stout sack was turned inside-out, and three of those dull-looking, brick-shaped bars came tumbling out. Oscar instantly glanced at the face of Anstey. He saw the other stare as though he could hardly believe his eyes, for, of course, a man of his varied experience knew without being told what those singular looking objects must be.

“By thunder! you *did* hit the cache, didn’t you?” he exclaimed, his eyes fairly sparkling with avarice, as he fixed them upon those three dull-looking bricks that he knew would mean a nice little fortune for any one lucky enough to get them in his possession.

Just then the captain appeared, coming up from below. He frowned when he saw how accident

had revealed more than he wanted the prisoners to know. However, it could not be helped now, since the "cat was out of the bag." And if his plans carried as he expected, this information would never reach Badger until it was too late to profit him, since he must only find a plundered hulk left behind, as the treasure hunters sailed for their next destination.

So the three men were ordered to follow him below, their hands being once more freed from the bonds. Captain Shooks watched their every movement, and made no bones of showing a pistol he carried.

Later on he came up again, and looked satisfied that he had gotten rid of a nuisance.

"They'll not be able to break out of the cargo hold, I'm thinking," he told the boys, who, by their demeanor, were expecting some sort of explanation from him, which the obliging skipper was only too willing to give.

"How long do you think we will be able to work here without being bothered by that old piratical cutthroat, Badger?" asked Ballyhoo, who did not seem at all particular how he called names.

"Well, that's impossible to say," he was told by Captain Shooks. "They evidently mean to lie low, and trust to these chaps to let 'em know if anything interesting happens. We'll work like troopers to complete our job. I'll take my turn at it, too. And all the while we'll have some one on guard to let us know if any craft shows up. If it looks bad, and we still feel there are things to be

got at down below, we'll dismantle the float and take a dive before they get here. At the worst we can run for it, and fight if hard pushed."

Apparently, Captain Shooks had the situation well in hand. He did not intend to yield a single point to the enemy if he could help it. And the more Ballyhoo saw of the skipper of the *Argonaut* the better he liked him.

"If that slick article of a Badger is any improvement on our captain," he told the others, as they sat there watching Shooks getting ready to equip himself in the armor of the diver who had just come to the surface after an exhausting time of it below, "he must be a holy terror, that's what; because the skipper of our boat seems to be right there with the goods, every time. Oscar, didn't I hear you saying you'd like mighty much to go down in one of those suits, and see what the old hulk looks like at close quarters?"

"Yes, and later on this afternoon, if the skipper is willing, I'm meaning to try one little trip. I may not be as good in the water as you, Ballyhoo, but I'm tall and strong, and think I could stand my turn playing diver."

"But Oscar, you did go down once before, you remember," said Jack.

"Yes, when that diver came up from the city to discover what had happened to the outlet of the lake by the big dam. The water was thirty feet deep, too. I made good friends with the man, and he let me put on his suit, and creep down the long ladder. So I stood there at the bottom, and

saw what he was doing to fix things. Ever since then I've had a longing to make another try; and when we agreed to join this expedition I told myself I'd do the same at the first chance."

The diver who had just come up had not managed to run across any further prizes. He said he had covered quite some territory inside the hulk; but it was dark even in spite of his electric torch, made especially for underwater work, slippery and very hard to get around even to an old hand.

Captain Shooks went over the side, and was lowered by means of a rope, though a stout ladder extended part way down, to give the diver a fair start. After reaching the foot of this he must swing free, and depend on those above to keep lowering him until the ground was gained.

The time passed away. It was long after the middle of the short afternoon, when again Captain Shooks appeared. Apparently he had not been successful in his laborious search, for he sat down at once, and allowed them to unfasten his helmet.

CHAPTER XIV

INGOTS OF GOLD

“No luck that time, lads,” the skipper went on to say, as soon as they detached the big heavy helmet that had been securely fastened to its base, resting on his shoulders. “I scoured every part of the old hulk I could reach, but it seems that in all these years the bars have been knocked about, and perhaps many of them are buried deep under the sand if they ever got outside the shell of the wreck.”

Now was Oscar’s chance to mention what he had on his mind.

“I’d like to take a turn down below, Captain, if you don’t object,” he said.

The skipper looked at him quizzically.

“I’d be only too glad of the chance for a new recruit, if only you knew the ropes, lad,” he observed seriously. “Both of my men are tired out, and need a spell of rest. It’s no child’s play to stay down there an hour at hard work.”

“But I have been down in a diver’s suit before,” protested Oscar.

"You don't tell me!" ejaculated Captain Shooks; "well, it'd be hard to run across any sort of game you boys haven't tried. Where did it happen, lad?"

Oscar explained in as few words as possible.

"So you see I know a little about the business," he continued, believing he had made some sort of an impression on the commander. "I would promise to be very careful, and not take any unnecessary risks. So say yes, Captain. There is just time between now and sunset for a little look around, and I want to see what the inside of the old Spanish galleon is like."

Captain Shooks smiled as though a pleasant thought had flashed through his mind. These Motion Picture Comrades had a great record for being lucky. Many things they had told him connected with their previous exploits pointed to that as a positive fact. Hence, it might be a wise thing for him to let one of them take a hand in searching the old wreck. If that little cherub aloft that seemed to be guarding their fortunes continued on the job, possibly something fine might come out of the "little look-in" Oscar declared he wanted.

"Well, have your own way, lad, have your own way," he told Oscar; "only if you do get into any trouble don't try to shove the blame on to me."

"Everything will work all right, Captain, I promise you that," said the boy, who felt a thrill pass over him at the thought of being about to go down, just as these veteran divers had been doing, and prowling around there amidst that

strange waving growth, where all sorts of queer creatures might have their abiding places.

And then there was the old hulk of the Spanish galleon, too, with all its romantic association; Oscar wondered whether he would run across any grisly reminder of the fact that human beings once walked that sloping deck, and that they had gone down centuries back with the ancient ship to an ocean grave.

The two divers had listened to all this talk with more or less interest. They knew that if the captain figured they should work throughout the night, taking turns, they would have all they could reasonably do; and if Oscar was able to "spell" them as he suggested doing it would be something gained. Besides this, they had come to take a great interest in the trio of venturesome chums, having, with considerable interest, heard them tell of their previous undertakings.

They commenced rigging the boy up in the suit worn by Hicks, the first man who had gone down. As they worked they told Oscar many things, both with regard to how he should manage the air pipe, and the life line. Besides this they explained to him as well as was possible, just how the wreck lay, and what he must do in order to keep from getting caught in the same.

Finnegan, a warm-hearted Irishman, also told the boy where he had discovered the three bars which came up by rope.

"Sure the trend all sames to be in thot direction, me bye," he concluded, as he got ready to

affix the headpiece that would complete Oscar's diving armor. "Look beyant the place where I set three stones, wan on top av the rist. 'Twas me-silf meant to continue me labors in the same quarr-ter av I wint down agin."

"I'll remember that, Finnegan," the boy told him thankfully.

Ballyhoo insisted on shaking hands with Oscar.

"Look here, don't get the notion in your head," the latter told him, laughingly, "that it's good-bye this time for good. I expect to come up again in good shape. If you keep your head about you there's little danger, Hicks says."

"One thing I hope is that you don't happen to run across a man-eating shark while you're down below," Ballyhoo went on to say, with a shudder; for he could not forget the close call he himself had passed through. "We saw a whopping big pirate swimming around, you remember, when we were hunting for the wreck; besides that pair we watched scrapping."

Apparently what he said did not deter Oscar in the least. He had learned just the course he must pursue in case a shark did come around, and act as though too curious regarding the unwieldy creature prowling about the wreck. And both divers had assured him there was little need of anxiety.

So presently he started over the side of the float. The sun was just about an hour above the western horizon, so that he would not have any great amount of time to do his looking about.

It was a queer feeling that assailed the boy when the sea waters closed over his head, and he continued to descend step by step, following the ladder down into the depths.

Presently he reached the terminus of the structure. When he lowered his foot again it encountered only empty space. Thereupon he gave the signal to those on the float that he was about to swing off, after which he lowered himself, making use of his hands upon each round until in the end he was being sustained simply by the life line.

Down he continued to go foot after foot, with more or less of a rotary motion. When it seemed as though he must have descended dozens of yards, all at once Oscar discovered by the aid of the faint light penetrating to those depths that he was hovering over a patch of the waving greenish white growth that could pass under the name of sea ferns.

Another few seconds and he felt his feet strike the ground. Here his first duty was to straighten out the lines, so that his pipe might not get foul, cutting off the flow of fresh air that was being pumped down to him from the raft. After that he commenced to look around, using the electric torch, which had been placed in his hand before the start.

Before him in one particular quarter he discovered a dim object rearing up, and which he realized must be the long sought hulk of the ancient galleon. Toward this he immediately proceeded,

trying to remember the distinct directions given by the divers, by following which he would most likely save himself considerable trouble in gaining entrance to the old vessel.

Now he was clambering up the sloping deck, taking advantage of the several devices which those experienced campaigners had arranged to facilitate this entry, knowing how often it must be repeated in the course of their labors.

Then the yawning cavity lay before him, being what at one time had stood for the companionway, by means of which the cabin under the stern deck of the ship could be reached. Time and the action of the waters in these cycles of years had demolished parts of the original superstructure of the ship, so that it was difficult to tell just what parts of it still remained intact. But having been coached by the divers, Oscar felt sure of his ground.

He looked carefully about him, first of all. This was partly to familiarize himself with his surroundings, so that he might not by any accident get lost while carrying out his investigations. After that he boldly swung himself loose, and commenced to drop into the interior of the vessel.

It was always necessary to drag his air hose after him, and be very vigilant in order to make sure that no injury befell the same; also to see that the life line did not become entangled so that if suddenly needed either to send a signal up or be drawn forth bodily himself there would be nothing to interfere.

He saw many things, but nothing of an awe-inspiring nature. Doubtless there may have been ghastly reminders of the tragedy that had overtaken the treasure-ship, but the ceaseless eddying of the water to and fro, in and out of the wreck, had long ago hidden them from view.

Oscar had figured on enlarging upon the plan spoken of by the diver. He believed that the oscillation of the hulk would gradually move the heavy ingots of precious metal in a certain general direction. Accordingly, he kept continually on the watch to find the three stones piled on top of one another in the shape of a cairn, or marking spot.

When presently he discovered this, he knew he was on the right track. After that it was only necessary for him to keep pushing ahead, entering upon the region that, owing to lack of time, the diver had not yet explored.

Then he tripped over something that felt solid. Hastily turning the soft glow of his waterproof electric torch down, what was his joy to find that his suspicions were confirmed, and that he had actually come upon another of those brick-like objects for which they were searching.

Encouraged by this success, Oscar pushed further on. He soon found a second, which he succeeded in placing alongside the first. At the same time he knew he would not have much more time to continue his search, for it was exhausting work, especially to one unaccustomed to wearing all that heavy material in the way of suit, headpiece, and shoes with leaden soles that ordi-

narily would seem as though they weighed a ton, though when in the water this result was neutralized.

When he came upon a third ingot amidst the rubbish that had collected in the lower part of the hulk, Oscar decided he must give up the search. To carry these three heavy articles to the outside of the wreck took considerable time. Here he managed to get them safe inside the stout sack designed for that special purpose, after which he gave the signal that he was to be hauled up.

It was time, for he felt his head spinning, and a terrible yearning seize him for fresh air. Indeed, it seemed to Oscar that never in all his life had his tortured lungs drawn in a sweeter breath than when the headpiece was finally unfastened, and he saw the faces of his chums about him.

“Say, you were nearly all in, old scout,” said Ballyhoo sympathetically.

“Pull up the sack!” was all Oscar could gasp, and as the men finished doing this task, to disclose the three prizes the amateur diver had drawn in the lottery, Jack and Ballyhoo shook hands together, while Oscar managed to regain enough breath to add: “And I believe there are more of the same kind still down there in the old hulk, only I don’t want the job of going after them. It was awful being in that slimy place, with all sorts of giant crabs, and strange sea creatures staring at me, and sliding past, wriggling as they went. But still I’m glad I had the experience.”

CHAPTER XV

WHEN MORNING CAME

THE setting sun told them that evening was near at hand. Captain Shooks had determined to work through the whole night, using shifts so as to make the labor continuous; and he himself promised to share this duty with the two divers.

The sooner they exhausted the chances of finding more of the treasure the better. With the *Dauntless* so close at hand their operations might be brought to an abrupt termination at any time. Should Captain Badger become alarmed at not having received a report from his spies, and start out to investigate, of course the result would be the discovery of the float, and a windup of the work.

Jack, for one, was not sorry. He fancied that he had made about all the pictures possible in that particular field, but believed there were other submarine depths waiting to be explored, and made to live in motion pictures, for the education and enjoyment of untold millions of patrons of the "movies."

This being the case, Jack, as a true artist, eag-

erly awaited the time when they should start out to seek those new fields of adventure. With him the finding of the long lost treasures of the sea took second place; of far more importance was the discovery of those rare curiosities that had, ever since the world began, been hidden from the eyes of mortal man, but were now about to be revealed in all their startling grandeur.

Oscar and the skipper talked matters over late into the night, when the others had retired to their bunks. The work was still going on, lanterns being used on the float to show the men how to carry on their operations. By the dim light of these the diver was sent down below, and the pump kept laboring steadily so as to give him a plentiful supply of air.

It made a weird scene, and one Oscar would never forget. Indeed so fascinating had it become to the boy that it was midnight before he could tear himself away from the society of the captain, and seek his own bunk. There he dreamed of untold treasures coming up from ocean depths, accompanied by all manner of terrible monsters fashioned after the manner of Chinese dragons, and those gigantic lizards of prehistoric days, such as we see now and then fancifully sketched in publications, or discover arranged in museums of fossil remains.

It had been arranged upon the conclusion of their work in this particular spot at Coco Key, to seek still another Caribbean Sea island, where their map told of a more modern sinking of a ves-

sel believed to carry much specie in its safe. After that they could take their choice of numerous contemplated enterprises, even passing through the Panama Canal, and continuing their search in the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Jack had been a strenuous backer of this last suggestion. Of course he wanted to have a chance to capture a series of pictures dealing with the famous waterway connecting the two oceans, and which would add more or less spice and variety to his work.

So far as that was concerned both Ballyhoo and Oscar were quite as enthusiastic as Jack about the project of passing through the canal. They had heard and read so much about those wonderful locks, and the strategical value the canal added to the defense of Uncle Sam's dominions, that it was only natural all of them should wish to see the same with their own eyes.

When Ballyhoo, chancing to awaken, heard the steady sound of the pump going outside, and turning on the electric current close to his hand found that it was past seven, he gave a shout that aroused both his mates.

“Time we showed a leg, I’m telling you, fellows!” was the burden of his call. “I c’n smell breakfast in the air, to boot, and it must be broad daylight out there.”

“The pump is still wheezing,” remarked Jack, “which tells that they’ve kept it up steady all night long. They’ll be about played out by now, and must have a rest.”

"There, it's stopped working now. I wonder how many more of those jolly bricks they've hauled up," observed the Jones boy, as he hurriedly proceeded to get his clothes on. "From the fact of their keeping busy while we slept I reckon they must have been meeting with some good luck. I hope they don't weight the old tub down with the stuff so there'll be danger of her foundering. Sometimes a fellow can get too much of a good thing; I've been in that fix myself when they had a party at our house, and ice cream left over."

"Don't worry about that," laughed Oscar. "If it comes to it the captain can jettison heaps of stuff to make room for the ingots. Those barrels and planks took up a lot of space, you remember. And if necessary some of us could go back on a regular steamer."

"Of course you're only joshing me when you say that, Oscar," remonstrated Ballyhoo reproachfully. "There will be plenty more queer things to be seen in this under-the-sea hunt, and we started out to get all there are."

Soon afterwards they climbed to the upper deck, to find Captain Shooks just coming over from the raft. One of the divers had been hauled to the surface, and the men manning the air pump had quit work.

"Looks like we had about come to the end of our rope here, lads," remarked the skipper pleasantly, though he did look tired to death from being on duty so long, not to mention the several

times he had donned a diver's suit and gone below.

"Cleaned out, do you mean, Captain?" demanded Ballyhoo.

"Well, we haven't found anything since three o'clock this morning, when the last pair of bricks came up," replied the other, yawning wearily, "and I rather reckon all the balance of the stuff must be buried under fathoms of sand outside the hulk."

"That means no living being will ever see it again, doesn't it?" asked Jack.

"Well, if the day ever comes when they get an excavating machine that can work a hundred or two feet under the surface of the sea," replied the skipper humorously, "I wouldn't be surprised if they'd root out heaps of gold that's been buried for centuries. But till that time comes it's going to stay hidden."

"Well, the chef told me to say breakfast was ready, Captain," Oscar reported.

"And I'll be mighty glad to get some strong coffee, for I'm played out," the other admitted.

"But you mean to do some more looking about, don't you, while we have the apparatus rigged?" Ballyhoo wanted to know.

"I reckon we'll make a few more tries, lad, before we pull up stakes and clear out," he was informed. "I'm hoping that something will fetch that old filibuster over this way before we quit. I'd like to leave him the bag to hold."

All through the night one of the men had been

stationed near the end of the Key, seated in the small boat. His duty was to keep a vigilant lookout for any sign of a moving light; for Captain Shooks had been a little fearful lest the enemy steal on them unawares, and catch them either napping or at work.

This man was recalled by a signal, and another sent off in his place. Then breakfast occupied their attention, nor were any of the boys sorry to find such a bountiful spread put before them.

After that work was resumed at the old stand. One of the divers, who had had several hours' sleep, was sent down, the other resting meanwhile. Captain Shooks also announced his intention of giving it one more try personally, not being quite satisfied that the "pocket" had been wholly exhausted.

Ballyhoo was wondering whether it would be worth his while to try and see what it was like, but his fear of sharks finally forced him to decide against anything of the sort.

The early hours of the morning wore away. When the diver came up he brought nothing with him, though he had explored diligently in several fresh places.

"I reckon we've cleaned the old hulk out," Captain Shooks had said on hearing his report; "but since I've made up my mind to have one last look, here goes."

Accordingly, he went over the side of the float, and vanished from their sight. The boys were "spelling" the tired men at the air pump. It

gave them something to do, and at the same time relieved the sailors who had been keeping this sort of thing up for many hours.

“I hope now,” Ballyhoo remarked, as he labored manfully, “that nothing happens in the way of an accident, just when we expect to pull out of here shortly. That would be too tough for anything, and we’d miss the skipper dreadfully, too, you know.”

“You old croaker, whatever puts such things in your head?” said Jack scathingly. “He’ll be up again in half an hour or so, if there’s nothing doing; and then we expect to get a move on. As for me I’m crazy to start for that next stand, because there’ll be a chance for a new kind of film business.”

When the captain did appear later on he told them, just as soon as his helmet was removed, that there was no use of any further efforts. The treasure lode had been worked to the bone, and no matter how they continued to search, small chance remained for finding another one of the precious Spanish ingots.

Hardly had he spoken than Ballyhoo made a discovery.

“Hey! what do I see coming this way like fun? A man in our little collapsible, and paddling for all that’s out in the bargain. Guess he’s fetching some news, Captain. There, see him wave his hand; that settles it. He’s sighted a vessel heading this way. Now see us get a move on, will you.”

The man increased his efforts, and soon reached the float where the little group awaited his arrival, the skipper hastily discarding his diver's suit. Just as the boys had suspected, there was a vessel in sight. Seen through the glasses this boat bore all the marks of the black hulled *Dauntless*.

Immediately the skipper gave orders for making ready to clear out.

"It's too bad that we'll have to abandon all these barrels, and the lumber," he went on to say, "but the time is too short to take the float to pieces and stow the stuff away. Besides, we can easily run in at some port and get a fresh supply. Fetch those three men up from below; we can leave them here on the float to wait for their fellow pirates to come along and rescue 'em."

The officer and his two men looked curiously about when they came up out of the hatch, and blinking their eyes in the bright sunlight saw the hasty preparations for departure. However, they did not attempt any resistance when ordered on to the raft.

"Your boat is heading this way, and they'll pick you up in good time," Captain Shooks told them, at which the officer allowed a sardonic smile to creep over his face, doubtless under the belief that possibly they would be lucky enough to also secure a few of these heavy ingots of gold, such as he had seen brought up from the hulk of the sunken Spanish ship.

There was nothing else to do now. The skip-

per had carefully gone over everything, and even had the collapsible boat taken aboard, to be stowed away below. Then the order was given, and the submarine, with anchor raised, commenced to leave the float behind. The three men continued to stand there watching the departing treasure seeking craft, and evidently still anxious as to their own ultimate fate.

CHAPTER XVI

LEFT HOLDING THE BAG

“**THERE** she is!” exclaimed Ballyhoo, just as soon as they began to pass out from behind the island, and pointing as he spoke.

It was the *Dauntless* without any question, and the steam yacht was also heading directly toward the Key behind which all those recent operations had been taking place. No doubt there must have been quite a flutter of excitement aboard the other craft when the submarine was thus discovered coming into view. When they also caught the sunshine glinting from the wicked-looking rapid-fire gun that Captain Shooks had had brought up from below, and placed forward on the deck, possibly they would be apt to think twice before deciding to make any attack upon the rival treasure hunting craft.

The skipper appeared to be heartily pleased when he announced that he could recognize Captain Badger standing there near the wheelhouse of the steam yacht, and staring through his glasses at them.

“I’d give half a year’s wages,” he affirmed, “just to hear the hot stuff he’ll get rid of when he realizes the little trick we’ve played on him. The man who gets the better of the sly old fox has to rise pretty early in the morning. I’ve owed him a grudge of long years’ standing, and now we’re even again.”

“Do you suppose he’ll keep on after us, or start for the island?” asked Jack.

“Oh! he must be wondering why he didn’t get any report from that gang of spies he left on Coco Key,” explained the captain, grinning amiably, “and so the first thing he’ll be apt to do will be to take a run in there.”

“Then what will happen, sir?” continued Jack.

“Why, when he hears from those late prisoners of ours what took place, and how they’ve been kept aboard our craft while we worked all night long raising some of those grand gold bricks they saw us handling, I reckon nothing will do Badger but that his divers must go down and take a look around. That business will delay him a day or two, during which time we can be making a port, and laying aboard another supply of the stuff necessary for our work.”

“I wonder if that’s the last we’ll be apt to see of the *Dauntless*?” remarked Ballyhoo Jones, as they looked back over the foamy wake of the submarine, and saw the other craft still heading for the island.

Oscar shook his head in the negative.

“I could wish it might be,” he went on to say,

the skipper's having ducked down to see about something in connection with the engines that did not exactly please him; "but Captain Shooks seemed to figure that we'll be troubled off and on during our entire cruise by those fellows."

"Then one thing is plain," asserted Jack; "they've managed to get hold of a duplicate of our itinerary in some way, and know the different places we mean to visit, even if ignorant of the clues we have by which we hope to run onto the wrecks. On this account they are helpless beyond a certain point, and can only expect to catch us at work, and run us off, so as to seize the prize themselves."

"Well, here's hoping they'll have a warm session doing that same," jeered Ballyhoo. "And if ever it comes to a scrap, believe me, that little beaut of a quick-firer over yonder is ready to give a good account of itself. Captain Shooks has been through the mill too often to knuckle down to such a pirate as that *Badger*," and as he pronounced the name he snapped his fingers blithely, as though holding the notorious adventurer in contempt.

Shortly afterwards they saw the steam yacht turn the end of the island, when, for the first time, those aboard doubtless discovered that suggestive float, with their trio of men upon the same. The boys pictured the scene that would follow, and how, inspired by the fairy tales these worthies could spin, of the wonderful ingots they had seen hauled to the surface from the wreck, *Badger*.

would hasten to send his divers down, in the hopes of having frightened the others away before the mine was wholly exhausted.

“Won’t he be a furious man, though,” Bally-hoo laughingly said, as they talked this over, “when he realizes that we only left him, as our skipper remarked, an empty bag to hold?”

“It’s beginning to kick up considerable out here, for one thing,” announced Jack, as the squat undersea boat began to pitch more or less, and the waves could be seen running higher and higher.

“Yes, and once again you can notice clouds gathering over there,” Oscar added, as he swept his hand around to indicate the direction. “We may run into another storm before the day is much older.”

“Huh! what does that matter to us?” Bally-hoo chuckled, “when we can drop out of all the rush, and lie at the bottom as snug as you please, waiting for the waves to quiet down, and the winds to cease? I tell you these tubs may not be very comfortable in a whole lot of ways; but when it comes to dodging trouble in the shape of storms they’ve got a hunch on everything going, believe me.”

Lest the enemy might think to keep a lookout so as to report their course, skipper was taking a false tack. Later on this could be easily remedied, and the lost time made up.

An hour afterwards the little Key was almost out of sight, even with the glass, for with the rising of the clouds, and the freshening breeze, there

had come a slight mist in the air that rendered seeing difficult.

“Good-bye to Coco Key, then,” Ballyhoo had said, waving his hand toward the distant northwest where the island lay. “And I warrant you those chaps are the busy lot right now, sending a diver down, and holding their breath until he comes up again to report nothing doing. But say, it’s getting beyond a joke out here. You’ve got to hold tight unless you want to be tossed overboard. I move we go below, boys, and settle down; any old time now the skipper will be giving orders to close the hatch, because we’re meaning to dip under.”

It happened that they received notice to leave the “hurricane deck” before Ballyhoo’s advice could be acted on. And the last glimpse they had of the ocean things were certainly looking pretty stormy.

Then followed the customary sounds that told they were taking on water ballast, and sinking fast. After that the rocking, sickening motion gradually ceased until they were moving on an even keel, with everything steady around them.

As usual the boys, not being able to move around much, sought their bunks, to lie there and doze, or else converse on the many subjects that were of interest to them. Oscar wandered off at one time, there being something he wished to see in connection with the working of the submarine at such a time as this.

Jack, upon finding that nothing could be dis-

covered through an observation bull's-eye, when he opened the stout shutter, save a surging mass of green water rushing past, realized that picture taking would not pay him just then. Besides, he began to fear that he would make too great inroads on his stock of reserve films unless he exercised considerable caution, so he determined to bide his time, as there were undoubtedly wonderful things yet in store for him.

Hours crept by.

The tired divers no doubt welcomed this opportunity to recuperate after their recent strenuous employment. Captain Shooks, too, must have spent much of this time in his bunk, for the boys saw nothing of him; though he may have been up in the conning tower several times for aught they knew, advising the man at the wheel, or taking an observation by means of the periscope as to the condition of the weather above.

When the three chums were beginning to feel dreadfully tired of being shut in such cramped quarters, and with poor air to breathe at that, Ballyhoo made the pleasing discovery that the electric pumps were busy again.

"We're going to the surface, boys!" he told the others gleefully. "Oh! how I'm longing for a lungful of that salty air. I never knew how glorious pure air could be until I first spent three hours cooped up in an undersea boat. Why, right now I can taste oil and gas to beat the band. This sort of travel may be novel enough, but it isn't all it's cracked up to be, by a jugfull."

Presently they knew they were drawing near the surface on account of the renewal of that pitching motion. Captain Shooks, however, must have figured that it would be perfectly safe for them to emerge, for the pumps continued to work, and in the end through the bull's-eyes they could catch occasional glimpses of daylight, though, as a rule, surging water blinded their view.

When this had continued for perhaps an hour they felt a sudden relief, showing that the hatch above the conning tower must have been opened to allow fresh air to circulate through the boat. The ventilators, too, were in use again, and conditions seemed vastly improved.

Being allowed to climb aloft later on, the boys saw nothing around them in any direction but a tumbling sea, with foam-crested billows. It was surely an inspiring sight, especially when seen from the deck of a low craft like a submarine, that lay on the heaving waters like a duck.

Jack, unable to resist the temptation to immortalize that picture, managed to get his camera on deck, and, with the help of both his comrades, work off part of a film that would give them great delight in some of the days to come, when they were once more safely back in quiet, sedate little old Melancton.

The wind was dying down, however, and by evening they expected there would be a quiet sea, with simply long rollers running, over which they could make rapid progress.

Nothing happened of any moment during the

next night, though they continued on their set course, heading for a certain port where Captain Shooks had often touched, and hence felt sure he could obtain all the supplies required.

It was somewhere about the middle of the second day when they sighted land, and the boys were told they would soon have an opportunity to stretch their legs ashore for a few hours; possibly they would remain in port until the following morning, since there was no great need of haste.

This news pleased them all very much. It was, indeed, hard to be contented and happy when compelled to occupy such cramped quarters. Ballyhoo wondered what the crew of a raiding submarine must feel like when kept aboard for weeks at a time. He concluded that this one experience was going to do him for the rest of his life; if fortune was kind enough to allow him to see his native town again he meant to take a solemn vow to confine the balance of his roving to dry land. Whether this resolution on the part of Ballyhoo would hold good only the uncertain future could prove, for he chanced to be one of those boys who often change their minds.

CHAPTER XVII

VIA WIRELESS

SOME hours later and the queer looking under-sea boat entered the harbor of Curacao, belonging to the Dutch, and situated off Dutch Guiana. Here their coming kicked up no end of a sensation, for it was immediately supposed that this must be a German submarine, intending to raid British commerce of the Caribbean; and all sorts of complications with regard to the meaning of "strict neutrality" came up to worry the port officials.

But the sight of "Old Glory" being flung to the breeze from the conning tower of the unwelcome visitor reassured the officials. They were later on stunned to learn that the *Argonaut* was not a war vessel in any way, but a peaceful commercial venture, and really what her name signified, for she was seeking the Golden Fleece.

Here they were allowed to come to a dock and tie up, though closely watched lest that flag overnight change into the double eagles of Germany, and a dash be made for the open sea, there to commence the work of nautical destruction.

It was a strange cargo that Captain Shooks con-

tracted for. The crowds that gathered around and watched, expecting to see ammunition brought aboard, and possibly all sorts of war munitions and arms, stared to see oil barrels, that were undoubtedly empty at that, being delivered by the dozen, also stout planks of a certain size.

No sooner had they tied up than the three boys went ashore, camera in hand, and bound to look the port over. They had often read about this place, though none of them could remember whether it was famed for its rum, molasses or cocoa. But Jack soon found interesting sights that occupied his whole attention; and, besides, they certainly did enjoy being able to stretch their legs again, after such a long siege aboard the submersible.

It was on the following morning that Oscar had a peculiar thing happen to him. He had gone ashore to make a little purchase, which had been forgotten on the preceding day. Captain Shooks had told him they would not start until four bells, or ten o'clock, so the boy was taking his time.

He noticed a young fellow hovering around him as he walked, and wondered what it could mean. Presently the other seemed to make bold enough to approach him, and Oscar noticed that the young chap had his jaws set, as though fixed in some resolve.

“Is your name Oscar?” he asked the first thing.

“That’s what it happens to be; what can I do for you?” remarked the boy.

“And did you come in yesterday aboard that

submarine boat?" continued the other, apparently more relieved when he found that the boy met his advances half-way.

"Yes, with two chums of mine. We're taking motion pictures of deep sea subjects, and going down in a submersible gives us plenty of fine chances to get films of the queer things to be met with at the bottom of the sea."

"Well, do you happen to know anybody named Captain Badger?" continued the young man, at which, of course, Oscar started, for he realized that something of importance was coming next.

"I certainly know who the party is," he instantly replied; "would you mind telling me why you asked me that?"

"I'm meaning to do just that same," continued the young fellow. "My name is John Baxter. I was aboard a schooner that came here to load for Boston. I fell sick, and my captain deserted me here, without even paying me what wages were due. And I've had a hard time of it since I got well. Right now I'm not strong enough to work, and I want to get back to my home in Savannah the worst kind. I thought perhaps you might feel like helping me after I'd told you something that came by wireless last night."

"Go on and tell me," said Oscar. "There'll be no trouble about staking you to enough money to get you home, if it proves to be worth anything at all."

"Why, you see," the other hurriedly went on to say, "I got to know the wireless operator here.

I did some little thing to help him, and he's been kind enough to let me sleep in his room at the station while he's on duty. I've picked up a little knowledge of the game myself, and can read messages fairly well. Fact is, when I get back home I'm bent on taking a course in wireless, and trying for a job."

"Yes, and what happened that you think concerns me?" asked Oscar impatiently.

"Excuse me for being so personal. What I was going to say was this. During the night my friend had occasion to go back to his room for something; he was feeling sick, and in need of some medicine he had there. So, as I was sitting with him, he asked me to just keep an ear open, and pick up anything that passed by worth while. Well, I caught a message from a man who signed himself Captain Badger. He was calling Curacao, and asking if a submarine under the American flag had put in there, and promising a reward for an answer. He spoke of those boys being aboard, and I made out that the name of one was Oscar. Somehow I just guessed that was you."

Oscar nodded his head. He remembered that the *Dauntless* was equipped with wireless apparatus, so that it was nothing unusual for the steam yacht to be casting out feelers in every direction.

"Thank you for telling me of this," he said to the other. "It is of considerable importance to me and my friends, also the skipper of the submersible. If you will come back with me on my return, I'll see that you are given what money is

needed to take you to Savannah. Of course when the operator returned to his post he had that message; what answer did he send?"

"Oh! he told Captain Badger that such a vessel as he mentioned had arrived at Curacao yesterday afternoon, and was even then in port. He even explained about your boat taking aboard empty oil barrels and lumber. I reckon that must have just pleased this Badger a heap, for he promised to see my friend when his boat came into port for supplies, perhaps tomorrow."

Oscar was as good as his word, and later on before the *Argonaut* left the Dutch island, he saw that John Baxter was given a sum more than enough to pay his passage to Savannah, Ga.

This news, while interesting, did not cause any of them great concern. It simply confirmed their suspicion that after finding the "orange had been sucked dry," as Ballyhoo expressed it, Badger had once more set out to chase after the undersea will-o'-the-wisp boat, determined to try again and again in the hope of outwitting his rivals, and, perhaps, securing all the prizes that had already fallen to their share.

Forewarned was forearmed, and they would keep a bright lookout for that same steam yacht of the sable hue.

Once more they were off on the bounding waves, and with a secret destination in view. The splendid success that had been their portion thus far encouraged all hands in the belief that fortune smiled on their enterprise, and that, consequently,

the future would have more like triumphs to reward their energy and perseverance.

Two days later they approached another island in the Caribbean Sea. This time they were further to the west, and, indeed, not more than two days off the Mosquito Coast, where the great canal starts across the isthmus of Panama.

They had sighted numerous craft coming from or heading toward Colon, so that this section of the sea differed in many respects from the locality where their first effort had been carried out. Here, in the neighborhood of this island, a steamship had gone down some years back, which boat was said to have on board a considerable amount of gold, locked in the safe.

The crew and passengers had deserted their sinking vessel just in time to see her pitch headlong into the maw of the sea. They had luckily managed to reach the island, and in due time were taken off by a passing vessel.

Several attempts to locate the sunken steamer had resulted in failure; and so far as was known her treasure chest had never been looted. It was in the hope of locating this wreck and salvaging her safe with its valuable contents that now engaged the attention of the daring adventurers with whom our young friends had joined fortunes.

All that was known about that night of storm had come from the accounts published in the papers of that time. These were very vague, save that they agreed the steamer was being carried toward the island from the *northeast* when her

sinking condition caused crew and passengers to take to the boats; and that she went down in many fathoms of water long before reaching the reefs that partly protected the island from the storm's fury.

This at least was enough to give Captain Shooks his cue. He must start his investigation on the northeast side of the island, scouring the bottom of the sea over an increasingly wide area, until he had either found the object of his search or else felt compelled to give it up as a bad job.

So once again the boys found themselves looking out at masses of vegetation covering the deep sea valleys. Jack caught many a novel picture of amazing spectacles that must later on thrill all those who were interested in this new and heretofore untried field of discovery. They saw such creatures as they had never dreamed existed; all sorts of curious formations that seemed to possess life, for they fought one another furiously, and rubbed their queer snouts against the glass of the bull's-eye observation windows, as though consumed with a horrible curiosity to scrape an acquaintance with the inmates of this visiting boat.

For three hours the search went on. So far it was without avail, and the skipper finally came up so as to get his bearings afresh, when he would try again. He did not believe in such a thing as failure, until every artifice imaginable had been first of all exhausted.

After going down again in a fresh spot luck came their way. The intense white glow of the

searchlight shooting ahead showed them the grotesque outlines of a vessel. Yes, and it was undoubtedly a sunken steamship in the bargain, so that the chances seemed to be they had finally run across the object of their submarine search.

Once this was made certain, and they again arose to the surface. But the sea was running too strong just then to allow of making a float, and starting operations as before. Nothing remained but to bide their time; so after marking the spot with a buoy, they steamed nearer the shore, and the boys, taking the collapsible, landed, meaning to amuse themselves for a spell, hunt shells, see if there were all the promises of a fair and calm day on the morrow that navigators could wish; and it was with hope beating high in their hearts that they partook of supper, and afterwards sought their bunks.

Morning proved that the captain had been a good weather prophet, for, as the sun rose, it showed a sea almost as quiet as a mill pond. Only the long swells washed up on the little shell beach of the island with a murmurous complaint, as though voicing the voices of those who in centuries past and gone had found a grave beneath these same sub-tropical seas.

Feeling that time meant a good deal, the skipper had his men at work even before breakfast could be considered. The empty barrels were thrown overboard, and collected so that the platform of planks could be fastened over them, and

thus a float fashioned, upon which the diving apparatus might be worked.

Storms come up with very little warning in the treacherous Caribbean Sea, and, consequently, it was necessary to work at a lively rate in order to get all these preparations started.

Then a diver went down, and, as on that other occasion, the submarine was sunk in order to give him the benefit of the electric plant. Once more the boys watched the whole operation through their peepholes, and Jack thought it well worth his trouble to feature the diver making his way aboard the sunken steamer.

Two hours afterwards the second man went down in the wake of the pioneer, who had taken up most of his time cutting a way into the wreck. Finally he, too, came up to report that while he had managed to enter, and make his way to the captain's quarters, he was too near the point of exhaustion to finish the job. In fact, it was apparent that the man had come across sights inside the steamer that chilled his enthusiasm, even accustomed as he was to seeing skeletons in some of the hulks where duty in the past had taken him.

Oscar, it was noticed, made no sign about wishing to be allowed to take a turn in the diver's suit. As for Ballyhoo Jones, money could not have tempted him, once he heard Jack say what he thought that diver must have come across in the way of grisly reminders of the sea tragedy.

Captain Shooks was gone but half an hour. When they received the signal to commence draw-

ing him up the boys exchanged suggestive nods. These told that they, one and all, feared they were going to meet with a severe disappointment. Had things been favorable the skipper surely would have remained below at least a full hour.

Oscar and Ballyhoo attended to the task of assisting him to a seat, where the water dripped from his heavy suit. They also busied themselves in removing his heavy helmet.

As soon as the captain's face was revealed, they found that he had a disappointed expression on it that told the story before a word had been uttered.

"You found the safe, did you, Captain?" asked Ballyhoo finally.

"That's what I did, younker, because nobody wanted that piece of heavy furniture," came the booming reply; "but hang the luck, it was busted wide open, and cleaned out. We have been out-generated, that's all."

"But how could Badger have got here ahead of us, I want to know?" gasped Ballyhoo.

"Who said it was that pirate?" roared the skipper, gulping in huge draughts of fresh air. "The party who found the wreck was here at least a year ago, though it's been kept a dead secret, for some reason or other. See, here are some coins I managed to find scattered around on the floor in the cabin, with a lot of other truck. They've been lying there for some time, I warrant you; you can see how they're half covered with green mold. Well, that's the full amount of the *Shannon's*

hoard our Company will ever set eyes on. So it's up to us to get away from here in a jiffy, and make for some other field, where better luck may be waiting for us."

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE CANAL LOCKS

DESPITE his keen chagrin, the skipper was not at all discouraged.

“We would have won out easy enough,” he protested stoutly, as he watched the men dismantling the float, since there was no use of loitering longer at that place, because the prize had already been taken; “yes, we could have guzzled all that stuff ourselves if only some enterprising chap hadn’t stepped in before us.”

“Which goes to show,” said Ballyhoo, “that of all the agencies so far invented, and tried out, intended for finding treasures lost in the deep sea, the diving boat takes the cake. There’s no place within reason where you can’t go to look around, and locate missing wrecks. But let’s hope we’ll strike better luck next time.”

“Oh! one shot out of two is going some, you must remember,” Jack told him; “and, besides, think of all the thrilling pictures I’ve been able to pick up. Why, from the standpoint of art alone, this expedition ought to be considered a booming

success. And then those nice, dull-looking bricks will each pan out something like ten thousand dollars."

"Please don't think I'm complaining, Jack!" exclaimed the Jones boy, with a grin. "Fact is, I'd call this well worth while just to see what we've already done. Some of the things that have happened to us, or under our watchful eyes, will never fade from our minds. I know I'll shiver when any one mentions the word sharks. I'm seeing things in my dreams these nights, and you needn't be surprised to hear me let out a shriek any old time. If an ant bit me I'd imagine my leg had been snapped off between those terrible sharks' teeth."

By the time the barrels and the planks had all been safely stowed away, and the undersea boat turned her prow in the direction of the great canal entrance, black smoke discovered in the east told of an approaching vessel. When Captain Shooks learned this he laughed heartily, apparently under the belief that it might be the *Dauntless*.

"Late to the feast, as usual," he observed merrily. "I wonder now if Badger, when he hears about that empty safe in the captain's room below, will take it for granted we cleared it out. I hope he does, for I'd like to rub it into him good and hearty. It'll take a heap to wipe out the debt I owe Cap. Badger."

When Ballyhoo noticed the tender way in which the skipper caressed his cheek as he made this remark, he had an illuminating thought. After-

wards when he and his two comrades found themselves alone, Ballyhoo spoke of this fact.

“I wouldn’t be a bit surprised, fellows,” he said, in a low tone, “if that scar Captain Shooks carries on his left cheek had something to do with this same tough old adventurer, Josephus Badger. My opinion is they’ve had a scrap at some time or other, and our skipper bears the marks of his rival’s knife to this day. It must have been a pretty lively affair, I guess.”

“Some of these fine days,” Oscar mused, “those old war-dogs are going to come to grips again, and wind up this feud. They seem to hate each other like those two cats of Kilkenny, each of which thought there was one cat too many; so they fought and they bit, they scratched and they fit, till, save the ends of their nails and the tips of their tails of those two cats of Kilkenny, there wasn’t any. I don’t know whether I’ve got it just right, but that’s the idea.”

“Where do you suppose we’re going to head for next?” inquired Ballyhoo.

“Well, there are several other likely spots around the Caribbean that it might pay us to visit,” replied Oscar, to whom the question had really been put.

“But how about that one over there in the Pacific, down off the coast of Peru?” the Jones boy wanted to know. “From what the skipper said, I should think that’d be our best call.”

“He didn’t tell me positively,” continued the other, “but from certain things I heard him say-

ing later on I more than half believe we'll head that way now."

"Meaning the canal, Oscar?" chirped Ballyhoo, eagerly, his eyes betraying the tremendous interest he felt in the subject.

"Yes. It happens to be open now, after that last landslide that kept it closed ever so long; so we can get through without much trouble."

"Course the mere fact that this is a submarine vessel needn't prevent us from a passage through?" asked Ballyhoo.

"Why should it?" Oscar replied. "We are bent on peaceable pursuits, and this is a commercial vessel just as much as one of those American-Hawaiian steamships that carry the products of our insular possessions through the canal."

"Well, I should say they couldn't hold us back," laughed Jack. "Why, right now we're engaged in proving to the world that Americans can build just as reliable undersea boats as Germany, or any other country. See the voyage we've undertaken without any accident; and remember the clever work we're carrying on. Folks will soon know that all our submarines are not in the same class with that one that sunk, and stayed on the bottom, its crew caught like rats in a trap."

There was considerable patriotism about those three Motion Picture Comrades, and it frequently burst its bonds. Jack echoed the sentiments of his two chums; but in saying what he did he was not boasting, simply stating facts.

It was learned a little later on that Captain

Shooks did not mean to head directly for the canal. He had sent a duplicate part of machinery, likely to be needed at some time in the near future, to a certain port of call, and it was now necessary for them to go considerably out of their way in order to secure this. Once they had passed into the Pacific and no one could say when they would be coming back again, or if it would be by the same route; so the wise skipper believed in "making hay while the sun shone."

Two days later they approached the coast of Panama, intending to enter the canal with as little delay as possible, and cross over the isthmus. Jack, of course, had made all his preparations for taking a wonderful series of pictures, showing the route from end to end, including the famous dam, and the great locks that are the marvel of the age in their massive efficiency.

They met with a certain amount of delay on the way across, but nothing beyond reason, and when night came on congratulated themselves on having made such good progress.

"We're going to enter the lock right away," announced Ballyhoo, who had been, as he termed it, "cruising around," picking up information. "It's true night has fallen, and we may have to lie here until morning comes; but think of being able to say we actually slept in the locks of the Panama Canal. How few people can ever boast of such a feat as that, tell me?"

Both the other boys were, of course, interested. Jack had stowed away his camera, since with the

coming of dusk he had no use for the instrument. In the morning he anticipated catching the strange little submarine craft being towed through the canal with the aid of those powerful electric engines on the massive cement walls, as well as a number of other interesting features connected with the situation.

They stood there on the "hurricane deck" watching all that took place. Not a single move was made but that their vigilant eyes detected it, and many were the comments made, as well as good-natured arguments advanced.

"Seems like there's another vessel going to come along after us, and be locked in at the same time," announced Ballyhoo, as he heard much "tooting" from the quarter whence they themselves had just come.

"Well, two's company, three's none," laughed Jack; "so long as they don't crowd us, what do we care? It's little sleep we can expect to get tonight at the best. We'll have to be on deck to see everything that goes on."

The submarine had attracted considerable attention, and a number of people even had the audacity to drop down on the lower deck to take a look around. Captain Shooks good-naturedly did not order them off, though, of course, he would not think of allowing any intruder to see the inside of the undersea boat. The comments of these people amused the boys, even as they watched the dim, shadowy shape of the other boat drawing closer in the electric light.

“‘Great Scott!’” Ballyhoo was suddenly heard to exclaim, as though he had received a great shock; “what’s this I see, fellows? Take a good look at that boat, and tell me if you’ve even glimpsed the same before; because, as sure as you live it’s no other than our old friend, the *Dauntless!*”

CHAPTER XIX

BLOCKING THE GAME OF BADGER

“HERE’s a pretty kettle of fish!” declared Jack, in a disgusted tone.

“To think that we’d have to run across that duffer right here in the canal locks,” Ballyhoo went on to say gloomily. “What if those two old filibusters get to scrapping while we’re neighbors here for a while? It might mean the finish of our fine little cruise; for if anything happened to knock Captain Shooks out of the running there’s no one else could manage this queer old tub.”

“We’d have to take charge, pay off the crew, ship the cargo home, and then store the submarine down here in some boatyard until the company decided what to do with her,” said Oscar decidedly; “but what’s the use crossing a bridge before we come to it? The two skippers may not exchange a single word, knowing how they’d get in a fighting humor in consequence.”

It turned out that Ballyhoo was wrong in guessing they would have to remain in the lock all night. With such magical artificial illumination as was afforded by the numerous electric lights

scattered along both sides of the great walls, work could be carried on just as well during the hours of night as in the daytime.

It was not long afterwards when water began to come into the lock, and both boats commenced to rise toward the higher levels. The boys could see that their craft was an object of great curiosity to the entire crew of the steam yacht, for a group of sailors gathered along the side to watch them.

Something caused the trio of boys to go ashore in order to observe at close hand the working of the magnificent machinery by which the locks were controlled. Jack hoped that on the return trip they would be passing through here by daylight, for he must secure a set of pictures that would show just how the conditions were.

Evidently strict orders had been given to the crew of the other boat, for there was none of the customary interchange of salutations and jokes, such as might be expected. Those men knew who those aboard the submarine were. They possibly labored under the impression that they had been cheated out of more or less prize money by Captain Shooks' shrewd policy in getting ahead of them on two occasions. Hence they felt a bitter animosity toward the crew of the *Argonaut*, and it was well for the sake of peace in the Canal Zone that the rivals were kept apart.

When the time came for their release from the lock, the boys hastened to once more get aboard. The captain was sitting on the little deck above

the conning tower. Oscar believed he was holding some sort of weapon in his hands, though he could not be quite sure about this, for the skipper hastened to conceal whatever he had there.

"The expected storm didn't break, eh, lads?" he remarked, as they joined him.

"If you mean trouble with those other chaps," Ballyhoo quickly said, "we're just shaking hands with ourselves that nothing happened. We've heard some one whooping things up aboard the other boat, which we kind of imagine must have been Captain Badger. The men seemed to jump every time he shouted anything, and it's plain to be seen they're afraid of him when his mad is up."

"Yes, he was always reckoned a terror," admitted the skipper, between his set teeth; "and I've half expected to be favored with a visit from him. But the sight of those boys in khaki along the walls of the lock must have kept him from bothering us."

"But what about after we pass out of the lock, Captain?" remarked Ballyhoo; "it strikes me there may be places along the canal, or in the big lake we've got to pass through, where he might give us trouble, such as ramming into us, and claiming it was a sheer accident?"

"I've thought of all that," the other admitted, "and when we pass out I mean to tie up here close by, and spend the balance of the night within touch of these same U. S. regulars. Then if we have any trouble, we can look to them for assistance."

Somehow the boys all approved of this idea. It seemed both reasonable and prudent in their eyes. While ready at all times to defend themselves, as every American should, if they wish to maintain their self-respect, all the same they did not believe in going around with a "chip on their shoulder," and inviting an attack.

So they remained there on the upper deck, watching all that took place. The boys knew that after the crew of the *Dauntless* had dispersed to their quarters, at the command of their captain, others were constantly watching the submarine. They could see dim figures flitting back and forth, and acting as though they were desirous of remaining under cover.

"Hope they'll know us another time," grunted Ballyhoo, after the captain had stepped ashore to see about a matter of business; for fees had to be paid to cover their passage through the locks, since the U. S. Government does not propose to run a "free show," after going to such heavy expense.

"I'd give something just to know what they're saying about us over there," Jack went on to observe; "because there's no question but what that's Badger himself and his officers who are watching all we do here."

"For one thing," chuckled Ballyhoo, vindictively, "I reckon they're trying to figure just where we keep all those bully ingots of gold we cribbed from the old Spanish hulk, where they'd lain under the sea for some hundreds of years. They'd like to be able to use Roentgen Rays, and

look right through the sides of our boat so they could count how many bricks we stowed away. But even if they had that knowledge what good would it do 'em, tell me?"

Neither of the others appeared to know; at least they failed to answer Ballyhoo's question.

Later on the submarine skipper was notified that his vessel could leave the lock and proceed. He had already made arrangements, however, to stay in the canal just beyond until morning, allowing the steam yacht to pass him by, and go ahead.

It was a singular happening when those two boats ranged alongside each other. There was an utter absence of the usual greetings and rough badinage, and this must have struck any idle observer on the canal wall as peculiar, though the true inwardness of the situation might not be apparent to him.

Then the *Dauntless* passed on, and the squat submarine, looking like an ugly whale, being low down in the water, and with only the conning tower rearing itself above the superstructure, remained at her moorings.

"Well, we're not sorry to see the last of that steam yacht, if we told the honest truth about it," remarked Ballyhoo.

The boys being tempted to once more leave the boat and go ashore, for there seemed to be a number of other interesting sights they had missed on the previous occasion, spoke to one of the men about it, asking him to sit there on deck, and make sure that no stranger slipped aboard.

After another hour or so they had seen all that was possible under the conditions, and again made their way back to the boat. More than ever were they struck with the queer and ungainly appearance of the submersible, as they drew alongside, to find the sailor smoking his pipe and apparently keeping a faithful watch above.

“But,” said Ballyhoo, when this fact was mentioned, “she’s a dandy in her own specialty, which is diving, and staying under water. They ought to have named her the *Mallard*, it strikes me, because she’s built on that order.”

None of them cared to remain up any longer. The skipper made his appearance just then, and announced that he would see to it that a guard was posted on the upper deck, and armed in the bargain.

“It may be those sharks won’t think to try and do us any harm while we’re here in the canal,” he went on to say dubiously, “because it might be like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs; for their only hope seems to be to chase around after us, and try to swoop down on something we’ve found. But I’m taking no chances. You see, I know Badger too well to trust him one minute. He’s well named, though Weasel might fit him even better.”

Going below Oscar and his two chums soon made themselves comfortable in their several bunks. As the hatch in the conning tower was open, and the ventilators doing their regular work in addition, it seemed much more comfortable down below than

ordinary, for the weather was excessively warm during the days.

Oscar remembered lying there for a little while, thinking of things in the past; but he finally went to sleep. The other pair were already far in dreamland, as their regular breathing attested.

When Oscar awakened he could not tell why it was he seemed to feel a strange sensation, just as though some deadly peril hovered over them. A slight sound drew his attention, and turning his head on his pillow he saw something that caused him to hold his breath with amazement.

There was always a dim light left in the apartment the boys occupied, which, in fact, bordered the little den Captain Shooks dignified by the name of "office." Where he lay Oscar could look straight through the open doorway, and see the whole interior of this "cubby-hole," as Ballyhoo always called it.

Some one was stooping over in front of the desk at which the skipper so often sat when writing up his papers, and entering events in his log of the cruise. Oscar saw to his dismay that it was not Captain Shooks, but an utter stranger, a small, wiry fellow, who had managed in some mysterious way to get inside the submarine. Instantly Oscar suspected that the sailor they had left in charge of the upper deck while they went ashore must have been unfaithful to his duty, and left the hatch unguarded for a few minutes while he crept below, possibly to get his pipe.

It did not matter so much *how* the spy had man-

aged to get aboard as that he was searching eagerly through the skipper's private papers, evidently looking for the priceless chart that told, as near as was known, the exact location of a dozen other sunken treasure ships, besides the two already visited.

Oscar could not hold in any longer. Giving a shout he sprang from his bunk, and made a swift lunge toward the door of the office, intending to close this, and keep the intruder shut in until the skipper could attend to him.

Unfortunately, Oscar caught his foot in some object that may have been purposely placed there with the intention of tripping any of the sleepers should they awaken while the spy was at work.

As the boy went headlong to the floor, he saw the stranger shoot past him and make for the ladder leading up into the conning tower. As soon as Oscar could get to his feet, although half dazed from having struck his head severely, he hastened to chase after the vanished figure. Ballyhoo and Jack were at his heels, though utterly in the dark as to what it all meant.

When they got above they found that the man on guard was staring into the half gloom alongside the moored submarine. He had been thrust aside by something that came bolting out of the hatch; for, not expecting danger from that quarter, the sentry was caught unprepared; and before he could recover enough to use the gun with which he had been armed, the unknown had utterly vanished.

But after all it might have been much worse, for no particular damage had been done. The skipper told them he had the precious chart and directions where no spy could ever find them; and so Oscar and the other boys finally went back to their bunks, though an additional guard was stationed in the conning tower for security.

CHAPTER XX

THE END OF THE CRUISE—CONCLUSION

IN the morning the voyage was resumed, but they did not hurry, it being the purpose of Captain Shooks to let the *Dauntless* have plenty of time to reach the Pacific and go on. If they should find her hovering around as though waiting for them, nothing could be more simple with regard to getting rid of the rival boat than for them to submerge, and keep moving under the water until night came on.

This time they were meaning to head further south. They had a pretty accurate account of an old-time buccaneer that had preyed upon the gold coast with impunity, until finally it ran upon a disguised British sloop of war, which proceeded to hammer it so well that in the end the pirate sank. The account also stated, on the authority of competent witnesses who had left a record behind them before they passed away, that the notorious commander of the buccaneer had all his wealth on board at the time, it being his intention

to give up the nefarious business, and settle down under an assumed name in some Continental country, there to enjoy the ill-gotten fruits of his many sackings of towns and ships.

Of course, all that amazing treasure went down with the ship, though some of the crew, it appears, did manage to swim ashore and escape. Many unsuccessful attempts had been made to find the sunken piratical vessel, but then none of these were one-half so well fixed for exploring the bottom of the sea as the one Captain Shooks commanded.

So with ardent hopes they pointed the prow of their odd-looking boat toward the Peruvian coast, and in due time reached their destination. It proved to be by long odds the toughest job they had as yet undertaken, owing to the diverse ocean currents they struck after they had gone down to investigate.

For days they prowled around that region. When one clue failed the skipper seemed to have another at hand, upon which he depended to show them the object of their persistent hunt.

Jack was having the time of his life taking pictures of all the amazing things they discovered while prosecuting this search. He added several films to his already wonderful collection, and only feared his supply would run short before the subjects gave out, and wished he had waited at Panama for the new lot ordered shipped on from New York.

As time passed, and no reward came to their la-

bors, even the confident Ballyhoo began to despair of meeting with success.

"I guess the Pacific is our hoodoo, fellows," he was telling them on one occasion, as they sat on the edge of the lower bunk, or it might be a stool, for chairs were at a premium in those close quarters. "After all we'd better be cutting stick, and going back to the Caribbean Sea, where we did meet with our usual good luck."

"Here's the skipper coming to tell us something," remarked Jack, "and from the look on his face I guess it's good news in the bargain."

"Three to one he's decided to clear out of this mess, and get through the canal again to where we know our ground," ventured Ballyhoo confidently.

However, Ballyhoo was wrong for once. Captain Shooks had information of an altogether different nature to communicate.

"We've stopped moving," he started to say, "and in a cleared spot just ahead, where our illuminator makes every little object stand out like daylight, we've discovered something that tells us a vessel must have gone to pieces about here. The fragments look like an old-time anchor, for one thing, and some other metal parts."

"Then you think, do you," asked Oscar, sensing the meaning conveyed in these words of the skipper, "we're about on the spot where that pirate sank; and that she's been washed around in these currents until nothing's left of her hulk?"

"That's just what I'm afraid of, lad," admitted the other; "and that we'll have come down here

on a fool's errand. However, now that we're on the spot we must try as hard as we can to learn the truth."

Soon they had arisen again to the surface, and placed a buoy to mark the spot, so they could come again; for just then there was too much sea running to think of making use of a float.

After waiting there for two days the skipper could not stand any further delay; so it was arranged that one of the expert divers go down from the forward deck of the submersible, which, being low down near the water, might be made to answer the purpose temporarily. If he struck anything that promised good results they would linger still longer, waiting for the weather to change.

This plan was put into operation, though with much difficulty, and not a little added risk. But the diver knew no fear, and was soon down on the bottom, moving around, and looking for signs to tell the fate of the once notorious pirate ship.

While this was going on the boys, as well as the captain, remained there watching the men work the air pump, and wondering what luck would follow their venture in Western waters.

An hour passed. Then the long anticipated signal came to let them know the diver wished to be drawn up. One thing they soon learned, which was that his bag was empty, proving that at least he had not run across any more ingots such as rewarded their first search under the sea waves.

When his helmet had been removed, and he sucked in more or less of the fresh sea air, Hicks looked at Captain Shooks and grinned.

“In my hand pouch, sir, you’ll find just one lone gold piece,” he told the other. “That I found wedged in a crack in what I made out to be part of a door that was held down in the sand by the anchor. I guess, sir, that’s all the loot anybody will ever recover from the wreck of the old pirate ship. There are some queer currents racing about down there, that must get pretty fierce at times; and by degrees they’ve just pulled the hulk all to pieces, and scattered everything around for miles, I take it.”

Captain Shooks knew then that the game was up, so far as any hope of recovering pirate loot went. That lone gold piece, a Spanish one it turned out to be, he gave to Oscar, just as a memento of the occasion. And immediately afterwards orders went out to turn the prow of the submersible toward the north again.

They meant to abandon the Pacific for the time being. It seemed that Shooks believed he had enough results already aboard to justify him in turning back, and once more heading for Baltimore. Then, if all was well, he could make a start for the far distant Eastern seas, where many rich cargoes of treasure were known to have been located, but never recovered.

The three boys had been talking it all over among themselves, and come to a decision. This was to quit the expedition at Panama, and remain

there for a week or so, until a steamer came along to pass through the canal bound east, on which they might engage passage.

To tell the honest truth all of them were heartily tired of their cramped quarters aboard the submarine, not to mention what they had to endure from bad air whenever the boat was below the surface. The novelty had long since worn off, and they frankly confessed they knew when they had had enough.

Besides, Jack wanted to get those precious submarine pictures of his ashore, and securely on the way home by some better carrier than a boat that spent most of the time diving under the water, with a consequent moisture, inside as well as out, that could not be very good for delicate film material.

They saw nothing more of the *Dauntless*, and hoped that Captain Badger, despairing of securing any profit from trying to spy upon his rival, had gone off on a hunt of his own, following some clues he may have picked up.

Fortune allowed them a chance to make this change of base before two days had elapsed, and it was not long before a steamer was starting for New York City, on which they took passage, with all their possessions.

So far as they knew they were returning after having accomplished their several missions in the most successful manner. This being the case it can easily be understood that they saw the shore of Panama disappear below the hazy horizon one

morning, and then looked toward the North, where home and friends would await their coming, with the complete satisfaction that victory always brings.

THE END

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